THE WAYWARD WOMAN

PROGRESSIVISM, PROSTITUTION, AND PERFORMANCE IN THE UNITED STATES, 1888–1917

BARBARA ANTONIAZZI

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To the Loving Memory of Rosa Gava
(1905–1986)

List of Abbreviations

AAVS: American Anti-Vivisection Society
AMA: American Medical Association
APA: American Purity Alliance
ASHA: American Social Hygiene Association
ASSMP: American Society for Sanitary and Moral Prophylaxis
AWSA: American Woman Suffrage Association
CC: Congressional Committee
CTCA: Commission on Training Camp Activity
FBI: Federal Bureau of Investigation
ILGWU: International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union
NAACP: National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NAWSA: National American Woman Suffrage Association
NWP: National Woman's Party
NWSA: National Woman Suffrage Association
WCTU: Woman's Christian Temperance Union
WPU: Women's Political Union
WTUL: Women's Trade Union League

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Introduction

All Progress is experimental.
—John Jay Chapman, *Practical Agitation*, 1900

Progressivism is an untamable beast. Celebrated and condemned by historians of each generation, the age of reform has been praised for its forward-looking spirit and genuinely emancipatory accomplishments as well as criticized for its conservative undertow and class-inflected paternalism.[1]

In this work my main interest will be to read the dual nature of Progressivism in a way that addresses both the dangers and the possibilities represented by this period for the rapidly changing American society and its relationship to the state at a crucial point in its development. The debate about gender roles that took place during the Progressive Era offers, to this end, a venue for the exploration of the paradoxes that played out in both directions and consolidated into enduring institutional structures. In an attempt to transcend reductive theories of social control and the doctrine of separate spheres, I will elaborate on the notion of the wayward woman—not necessarily delinquent, though often decidedly dissident—to address the dialectical nature of social change between the late 1880s and World War I. In the extant literature on the time period, wayward woman have frequently been associated with prostitution and with the Progressive response to it. By using performance as a critical tool, I will supplement the prevailing understanding of the Progressive discourse on prostitution as it appears in canonical historical accounts, sociological studies, and literary analyses with a rearticulation of the customary opposition between "reformers" and "reformed." I will trace the territory between the iconic types of the "New Woman" and the "white slave" as a continuum of waywardness that structures the tensions of the Progressive Era between gender roles and between citizens and the state.[2] Through critical readings of a number of literary and non-literary documents, I will first highlight the interweaving social practices of

dissent that characterized upper-class and working-class women; then trace the still underexplored tropological transition between chattel slavery and white slavery; and finally redefine the societal stakes and cultural expressions of vice reform as they emerged in some noteworthy theatrical productions on the eve of World War I.

NEW WOMEN, WHITE SLAVES, AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN

During the Progressive Era, the dominant understanding of sexuality and gender in the United States underwent a paradigm shift that called for different regulations and politics. The iconic New Woman emerged in her many emancipated incarnations: the political activist, the intellectual, and the divorcee, but also the female breadwinner, the charity girl, and the urban woman of color. Concurrently, a preoccupation with prostitution developed into a national obsession and the Progressives invested enormously in the study and containment of what they called white slavery. The lurid phrase was confusing, since it subsumed both women who chose prostitution as well as the few who were forced into the profession into the same category. In the years before World War I, the campaign against a purported international white-slave traffic coalesced into a legal and extra-legal attack on organized vice that was waged with great fervor and a variety of motivations. At the same time that women were fighting for their right to vote and making themselves visible as social and political actors, the Victorians' association of women in public with public disorder was rekindled, branding as immoral and unfeminine those women who questioned a society based on the separation of spheres. In this context, the white slavery scare can be considered part of a more general attempt to fortify an exclusively male public sphere against the increasing encroachment of a female presence and the incursions of independent women. According to this defensive male stance, with few exceptions, any new form of femininity that appeared on the social scene was considered "wayward," since it crossed the boundaries that society had traditionally set for women, especially the restriction to domesticity that defined middle-class womanhood during the Gilded Age. The perception of female waywardness as

revealed by the attitude toward public women illuminates the variety of female "errant spirits" that "diverged from the norm and strayed from the course of truth, rectitude or purpose."[3] Additional meanings of the word "wayward" such as "disposed to go counter to the wishes of others, or to what is reasonable; intractable, self-willed,"[4] reveal a contiguity between the notions of deviance, autonomy, and activism. Accordingly, the wayward women who brought new forms of femininity into the light of the public sphere were not only debating definitions; they were *performing* these challenges to the old order, in the double sense of performance as *doing something* in public life, and as *showing something*, using *presence* to reveal something on the public stage that disembodied words alone cannot reveal: new public personas, new appearances of citizenship, new forms of visible womanhood. Thus my analysis of these challenges to the public sphere will be focused on the intersection between performance and performativity, between theatrical acting and political action, between showing something and doing something. The representative types of the New Woman and the white slave define the poles of the continuum of "wayward" feminine expressions that I will consider; my focus will be on the significance and historical formation of these prismatic entities, as well as the strategies deployed to anchor them amid the waning of an old social order and the emergence of a new one.

This focus will illuminate some of the paradoxes that characterized the Progressive Era, which emerged with particular urgency in the debate about gender roles. The gender ideology of the nineteenth century reserved the term "public men" for socially engaged males and the derogatory epithet "public women" for females who transgressed gender boundaries in flagrant ways. As Anne Boylan observes, because this ideology was so ubiquitous in the primary sources on which the first historians of the period primarily based their research—despite the presence of women in public spaces that we now take for granted—metaphors that allocated women to the domestic domain and men to the public have been extensively used to indicate the social relations between the sexes in the United States.[5] During the Progressive Era, for the first time in American history, developments in society and in

scientific discourse made it possible to publicly claim that a culture predicated on the separation of the male/public sphere from the female/private one was not acceptable.[6] At the same time, it was the period in which women capitalized on nearly a century of attempts to enlarge the domestic sphere, that is, attempts at different forms of social maternalism, which enabled some female groups to enter the public debate while discarding the idea of the domestic *tout-court*. The transition from the subservient and almost passionless Victorian "True Woman" to the independent and liberated New Woman was in fact a phenomenon deeply rooted in antebellum America, when, through a subtle process of resignification, the Victorian woman started elaborating her prescribed gender role in ways that externalized her maternal function onto society. This impulse gradually developed into the eminently political battles waged by middle-class women for temperance, civil rights, and social reform. For this reason, the Progressive Era is also considered to be the high-water mark of women's public influence, especially for its prominent community organizers, professionals, intellectuals, and political activists of middle-class background. While the New Woman reflected "the synthesis of the personal and the political for a transformation of politics reinvoked in subsequent generations,"[7] she also reassessed the difference between the social and the domestic, and the relation of both to maternalism and mothering. Social engagement was retained in its eminently civic and unsentimental form while the dimension of domesticity was constantly questioned, destructured, and undermined as an anchor of female identity. The emphasis on political consciousness was accompanied by a further awareness that, being largely sexual, represented a new challenge to the status quo. While in the middle classes Victorian passionlessness was gradually superseded by a revival of passion, a parallel awakening, stimulated by the more liberal environment provided by mixed workplaces, was taking place among women of the working and immigrant class. At least as far as widespread literary portrayals are concerned, the figure of the New Woman was appealing to laboring women too. For example, Christine Stansell defines the militant working-girl type who was becoming politically

visible in the great strikes of the 1910s with the appellation of “Rebel Girl” as “a New Woman neologism with a plebeian edge.”[8] The impact of socialism gave visibility to these women workers who not only engaged in labor rights battles but also made themselves conspicuous as consumers, as patrons of popular entertainments, and as peculiarly liberated entrepreneuses of individual sexuality. With the hard-won independence and self-confidence that paid labor provided, working women began to find spaces of sexual independence and endorsed eroticized behavior, also in its commercial nuances, as a form of self-determination. In their romantic relationships they manifested personal objectives that marked a departure from traditional female roles and resonated with the New Woman’s renunciation of passionlessness. The development of independent prostitution, changes in courtship, and the emerging practice of “treating” signaled a challenge to generational and bourgeois authority as well as a form of criticism of the cooptation of women’s participation in the formal cash economy.[9] In short, during the Progressive Era, a New Woman does in fact emerge—however evasive and contradictory the phrase has proven to be—and she does so flaunting the anti-domesticity of her intentions and revealing the diversity of the female category.[10]

The impulse on the part of traditional male powers to resist this trend and reascribe women to the private realm became widespread across the social spectrum: in the increasing resistance to women’s suffrage, in the limitation of female access to higher education and to the prestigious male professions, and in the unwavering custom of minimizing the contributions of female workers both in industry and in the labor movement. In keeping with the rationale behind this resistance, and with a range of germane Progressive concerns, the agitation around prostitution became functional in passing regulations ostensibly meant to combat sexual exploitation, but which ended up setting standards of ethical sexuality that redefined gender roles according to residual Victorian paradigms of national femininity. The effort to reestablish a traditional moral order, which was epitomized in the anti-vice campaigns, exceeded the boundaries of a power conflict between the sexes. In fact, through a series of juridical “advancements”

it resulted in the consolidation of power in the hands of certain white middle- and upper-class groups of reformers and the expansion of federal and state government power over individual citizens in ways determined by the views of these groups. The body of new laws minted to combat the white-slave traffic heavily reflected certain racist and nativist concerns that constituted a pressing preoccupation for many Progressive thinkers, activists, and legislators.

The New Woman and the white slave function as the two opposite poles of the continuum of female waywardness because they can be defined in opposition to each other: the New Woman overtly defied the validity of a society segregated by gender while the white slave, the ultimate symbol of eternal feminine defenselessness, reinforced the ostensible necessity of this segregation for the protection of women. In this light, the various embodiments of the New Woman were chastised and reconfigured within the preposterously Manichean world that white slavery presupposed and that countless novels, plays, movies, articles, and legal cases perpetuated. In this world, an unquestioned divide separated those pure girls outrageously forced into vice from the impure, irredeemably fallen, or "unnatural" women who were themselves sources of vice. In ways that I will illuminate in my analysis, this divide of purity and vice inscribed on women was also rooted in the more general divide that separated the righteous white American from the suspicious ethnic and racial Other. Still, the dialectic between the enabling archetype and the immobilizing one is not sufficiently explained by the idea that the lost purity of the former could be restored through the symbolic salvation of the latter. This rhetoric of agency and subjection underlying the anti-prostitution debate was also used among women themselves, according to hierarchical principles that informed the understanding that women of different classes had of one another.

Among the New Women, for example, were writers and activists who empathetically understood the plight of the city poor, but who still placed themselves on a level that was evolutionarily more advanced than the working classes and who, therefore, understood their role as reformers in condescending terms of control and dictated guidance. While they were not solely responsible for fueling the white slavery

hysteria, these women entered the debate without noticeably diverging from the dominant rhetoric of female victimization and consequently supported restrictive measures that curtailed the legitimacy of female consent and autonomy. Paradoxically, conservative women's groups, theoretically supporting the ideology of the passive woman who remains at home, often made very public activists of themselves, using some of the same techniques that characterized the New Women whom they opposed: organized female opposition to the suffrage movement, for example, deployed assertive public behaviors, although they relied on a rhetoric of demureness that cast the more aggressive public presence of their political opponents as sexually scandalous. As a metaphor, white slavery implied the annihilation of women's free will through abduction and sexual captivity; still, the battle against it became a crusade that mainly targeted young women who had made conscious decisions about their sexuality and adult women who had entered "the life" out of necessity. In supporting strong politics of protection, middle-class female reformers neglected the fact that what they called white slavery was often the result of decisions that women made under the conditions and pressures of a profit-driven economy. These reformers were thus complicit in obscuring both the causal role of economic factors and the agency of women, while also misreading the developing consciousness and independence of women of the lower classes.

Positing the wayward woman as the interpolation between the New Woman and the white slave will thus illustrate how these enduring female typologies were equally shaped by the complexity of the Progressive Era in personal and social terms. Questioning the relationship of gender and the state, this perspective problematizes notions of the private and the public, where the private refers to the citizen of a representative democracy and the public defines a governing machine more and more involved in the regulation of the individual. Before offering an overview of the conceptual and structural organization of this study, this introduction will first address two preliminary tasks: to present a necessarily concise notion of Progressivism that takes account of the social anxiety coursing through the period, and then to outline the tropological complexity of the term white slavery through a survey of its history and implications.

THE AGE OF DISJUNCTION

During the Progressive years, the transition of the United States from the rurally minded, Anglo-Saxon, production-oriented society of America's first century to the urbanized, multi-ethnic, consumption-oriented society of today reached its point of no return.[11] In this period the efforts to supersede the "vices of gentility" and the plutocratic course that had characterized the previous decades revealed the conflicts inherent in the recent rapid developments in the economy, society, and culture.[12] Contradictory tendencies flourished: the panics of 1893 and of 1907 fostered extreme labor unrest that coincided with the consolidation of modern American corporate capitalism; the great waves of migrants found middle-class reformers pleading their cause as tenement dwellers but were often faced with recrudescent nativism; female suffrage and many shades of New Womanhood emerged even as the dominant rhetoric envisioned motherhood as the only legitimate status of the female citizen.[13] This acutely unstable transition pitted the tensions foregrounding modernity against a longing for the recovery of an increasingly unattainable social order. Daniel Bell juxtaposes the nineteenth-century view of society as a holistic web to the "vicissitudes of bourgeois life and modernist culture which came to a head in the cultural contradictions of capitalism" by introducing the notion of society as "disjunctive."[14] Bell argues that three different realms—the "techno-economic order," the "polity," and "culture"—interact to constitute the structural frame of society but often suffer frictions and disjunctions as they respond to uneven rhythms of change and different principles. In the Progressive Era this form of disjunction became particularly tense, and caused the recrudescence of conflicts that, until then, had mostly lain dormant. For example, the conflict between the ethos dictated by the affirmation of corporate capitalism and the ethos required by the "polity" in promoting the spirit of participatory democracy would in the struggles of this period become an urgent conflict dividing the nation, particular social groups, families, and individuals. Exacerbated by the challenges of modernization, these fractures materialized in the great diversity of interests and conflicts animating the Progressives. The rise of

many issue-oriented groups coincided with a weakening of traditional party loyalties. But if the parties' role as primary channels through which Americans expressed their participation in public life started to decline, active coalitions of all sorts entered the political arena trying directly to shape policy.[15] Those pivotal decades, extremely dynamic in their struggles over the nature of democracy, are in fact the object of a vexed debate among historians, to the point that one commentator has predicted that "Progressivism may become just one strand in a contradictory historical moment characterized in quite different terms."[16]

The fact that the first generation of Progressives had an "infinite capacity for moral indignation,"[17] and notoriously agitated for moral reforms that covered a wide range of activities primarily involving the lower classes, has been emphasized to portray these initiatives as veiled efforts to control the immigrant working classes, under the cover of pity. More recent interpretations have supplemented the generally accepted notion that the Progressives were essentially "inspired by Lincoln's liberal republicanism to believe in the nobility of moral initiative in public life," with an objective assessment of the changes they produced through their embrace of a belief in "scientific experimentation, efficiency via rational organization, evolution and pragmatically defined values."[18] More inclined to a reevaluation of the Progressives' politics rather than their imputed intentions, historian Maureen Flanagan sharply criticizes the traditional interpretive scheme that compounds the Progressives into a "white, middle-class, native-born . . . generally male" caste of cultural Victorians to offer a comprehensive understanding of the Progressive Era—which includes ethnic, working-class, and African American groups as Progressives seeking their own political opportunities. By contrast, historian Rogers Smith persuasively locates in what he terms "centrist progressivism" the larger coalition of Progressives who, he argues, overwhelmed the "left progressivism" of thinkers like John Dewey.[19]

The urgency of the struggles over social issues during the Progressive Era evidences a radical reorientation with regard to the prescriptive system of idealized behavioral patterns that had emerged in

the Jacksonian period and that had shaped American middle-class sensibility since the Civil War. Sigmund Freud coined for this system of practices the term “Civilized Morality.”[20] As Nathan Hale describes it, Civilized Morality was the system of belief that had molded the middle-class generation born between 1850 and 1880, a generation that gained prominence during the Progressive years.[21] The connection between moral purity and economic probity at the heart of this ethos had formed the environment in which the political leaders of the Progressive Era were brought up—both in the aristocratic New York family of Theodore Roosevelt, but also in the poor, religious South of Woodrow Wilson. One can hardly imagine two figures more incompatible than Anthony Comstock, the self-appointed guardian of American Purity, and Sigmund Freud, but to a certain extent the two agreed on the fundamentals of nineteenth-century Civilized Morality and their breakdown, if not on what to do about this. In 1909, from the lecture hall of Clark University in Massachusetts, Comstock warned against the negative effects of lewd publications on the young; only a few months later, from the same venue, Freud warned against the pathogenic potential of sexual repression.[22] Despite obvious differences, they both reinforced a similar belief in the existence of a responsible self that could, to a certain extent, discipline its own sexual instincts. Consequentially, Freud and Comstock both broadly implied that civilization, progress, and personal advancement all depended on the control of the sexual drive. Civilized Morality combined the idea of rational sexuality as the hidden motor of industrious success with the pathologization of any divergence from this prescriptive norm. The most notably gendered aspect of Civilized Morality was a Victorian “feminine mystique” that relied on the archetype that historian Barbara Welter in the mid-1960s defined the Cult of True Womanhood; a token description that has proved, for the past decades and even today, a productive basis for heated discussion of Victorian Womanhood.[23] While Civilized Morality may have collapsed under its own weight, the emergence of a well-educated, politically conscious, self-supporting New Woman was a direct challenge to its dominance. Concomitantly, the spectacle of the sidewalks of the industrial cities, swarming with girls of diverse origins rushing to work in

gender-mixed environments and walking the streets unchaperoned, provided a scapegoat for fears about the demise of the old order and seemed to justify a connection between the changing female roles and growing social evils. Prostitution emerged as a civil obsession in disparate forms. What Mark Connelly calls the "progressive response to prostitution" was in fact a response to anxiety in the face of incautiously empowered women; but more broadly, "prostitution became . . . a clearinghouse for a variety of social fears occasioned by immigration, rural decay, urban growth and corruption, industrial squalor and oppression, unchecked venereal disease . . . and a shift in sexual behavior patterns."[24]

WHITE SLAVERY: MYTHOLOGIES AND GENEALOGIES

White slavery could be defined as the enlargement of age-old manifestations of sexual commerce into an all-encompassing apocalyptic myth. Not all scholars agree on the extent of the myth making. Path-breaking prostitution historian Ruth Rosen, although acknowledging that only a negligible fraction of prostitutes were forced into the profession through abduction, holds on to the potency of the expression, concluding that "white slavery should not be minimized as the figment of the reformers' imagination because it actually existed."[25] In a similar way, Edward Bristow has documented the existence of the phenomenon through the evidence he has produced of a slim network of procurers who smuggled Russian girls into American brothels.[26] However, Bristow's study of resistance to the traffic in Jewish women in Europe and America between 1870 and 1939 can only tangentially be related to white slavery as it came to be understood in the 1910s. By the twentieth century, in fact, the crime indicated the abduction of young white girls, where "white" generally meant American-born, preferably of Anglo-Saxon stock.[27]

The suppression of prostitution had been, for the latter part of the nineteenth century, one minor plank in a broad platform of social purity spanning the whole range of maternalist concerns. David Pivar observes that, by the late 1880s, even the Woman's Christian Temperance Union's

department for the suppression of prostitution could not gather enough volunteers, and that reformers at that time had a preventive rather than aggressive attitude toward prostitution—a tolerance that was later lost in the obsession with vice that came to dominate the Progressive approach.[28] In 1893, prostitution was defined against the backdrop of race-slavery for the first time in an American context.[29] In the case of this modern form of slavery, the conspicuously absent black element is invoked in a way that implies the "mythologization" of race bondage for anti-prostitution purposes. Borrowing Roland Barthes's vocabulary on modern myths, it can be argued that chattel slavery is maintained as a sheer "form," but that its meaning is made latent in the core while being distorted on the surface.[30] Barthes postulates that the original meaning of a complex sign provides the "nourishment" of the myth, "an instantaneous reserve of history, a tamed richness which it is possible to call and dismiss in a sort of rapid alternation."[31] Since the "fundamental character of the mythical concept"—namely its amenability to appropriation—comes forth when history is drained out of the form and absorbed by the new concept,[32] white slavery has all the semiotic features of a Barthesian myth: it is a mode of signification that appropriates the meaning of a former concept; it has a historical foundation; and it consists of different forms of representation that support mythical speech.[33] Historians such as Mark Connelly and Frederick Grittner, who base their study on the notion of white slavery as a myth, elaborate precisely on these features and trace a genealogy that harkens back to the captivity narratives and "conspiratorial visions" inherent in the American imaginary.[34]

The white slave had not always been an abducted woman. According to David Roediger, Britain rivaled the United States in producing, from early in the nineteenth century, a discourse that regarded white hirelings as slaves.[35] The metaphoric term "wage slavery" actually originated in Britain in the 1810s, but it was the antebellum American labor movement that most powerfully endorsed the criticism of wage work as slavery.[36] White slavery came to indicate the "slavery of wages" in the latter half of the 1840s, after the controversial anti-abolitionist and labor activist Theophilus Fisk uttered

the term for the first time in a public speech. For a while, Democratic politicians favored the new racialized phrase over its economic equivalent "wage slavery," but the purloined metaphor soon proved problematic, among other reasons, because of the recalcitrance of free workers to cast themselves in terms of bondage. By 1860, the term was abandoned in favor of expressions such as "free white labor."[37] While the labor struggles that started the disconnection of the term "slavery" from its reference to Black history continued without the term well beyond 1900, by the end of the century the locution that conflated bondage, paid labor, and white bodies treated as personal property was used only to indicate organized prostitution. As historian Mara Keire observes, British reformer Alfred Dyer was the first to separate, in his account of 1880, "the sexualized metaphor from the particularities of European prostitution and made 'white slavery' a term that anti-prostitution reformers could readily employ in Asia and the Americas."[38]

Although the sensation that popularized the notion of white slavery occurred in 1885, when the British reformer William Stead purchased a thirteen-year-old girl as a demonstration of how widespread the problem was,[39] it was the *First International Congress on White Slavery* of 1899 that allowed British Purity reformers to valorize on the international stage the second transformation of slavery adopted as a "modern myth." The draining of blackness out of slavery resulted in a supple signifier that could then be applied to a different phenomenon and serve the purpose of rekindling indignation in the public by transferring the atrocities accumulated in the colored history of slavery in America to dramatize prostitution as a modern form of bondage. With regard to their British counterparts, the American reformers in that phase still expressed a somewhat different sensibility. Henry Chase, the American delegate to the International Congress, reported to the European audience that "we have in the United States of America . . . no organized system of White Slavery."[40] This is not because Chase intended to minimize an issue that had always been a concern of American Purity reformers, but rather because ideas about prostitution in the United States did not yet allow for the recasting of "fallen women"

as helpless captives. Chase was the spokesperson for an attitude informed by awareness, but not yet by urgency: for example, in 1902, the first major Vice Commission of the twentieth century, the New York Committee of Fifteen, issued a report that contained only a passing reference to forced prostitution and never used the term white slavery. [41] However, also in the United States, chattel slavery was slowly being turned into a usable sign under which the contradictions of liberal capitalism, the Progressives' investment in the effectiveness of state initiatives, and the worries of whiteness under siege merged so consolidated in a copious body of white slave narratives that began to circulate around 1909.[42]

Scott Herring describes this genre as a spin-off of "slumming literature," a category going back to Eugène Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris* (1845) and including illustrious representatives in the British tradition. [43] Herring contends that "the genre was ingrained in the U.S. cultural imaginary . . . so much so that it fragmented into tramping tales, detective fictions, philanthropic reform tracts, and . . . modern sexological studies of homosexual bodies."[44] This consideration, valid for slum literature in general, requires more context when applied to the specific treatment of prostitution in long fiction. Laura Hapke has identified those authors who, in the waning decades of the nineteenth century, enlarged the possibilities of the tenement novel by treating the prostitute not as a marginal type included for the sake of local color, but as the protagonist of book-length endeavors.[45] Among the early representatives of the "prostitute novel" in the late nineteenth century, Hapke includes Joaquim Miller, Edgar Fawcett, Harold Fredric, and Stephen Crane; to this list I would add Alice Wellington Rollins, whose tenement novel I treat extensively in chapter 2. Reginald Wright Kauffman's novel, *The House of Bondage* (1912), was the best-selling work in the genre and reached its fourteenth edition in only two years. [46] Unfortunately, despite the extensive investigative effort that the author had put into researching his subject, the novel ended up sanitizing the very character that he claimed to depict truthfully and thus only validated the *idées fixes* of the Progressive Era.[47] According to Hapke, only the social protest writer David Graham Phillips challenged

late-Victorian ideology by elevating the streetwalker to financial success and refusing to moralize about her life. Precisely for this reason his *Susan Lenox: Her Fall and Rise* (1911) was heavily censored.

By the early twentieth century, increased interest in the problem of prostitution led to the flourishing of the white slavery tract, a purportedly non-fictional literary genre that expressed and fueled the anxiety over white slavery. These narratives, varying in length from the pamphlet to the gothic tome, enjoyed great popularity from 1909 to the beginning of World War I; one can count at least twenty-two of these works written by authors whose names are, with rare exceptions, now forgotten.[48] The Canadian-born Methodist reverend Ernest A. Bell, a former missionary who founded the anti-prostitution Midnight Mission in Chicago, authored one of the widest circulating white slavery tracts: *Fighting the Traffic in Young Girls* (1910). Chicago attorney Clifford Roe, besides being extremely active in prosecuting white slave traders and securing national anti-vice legislation, carried out his crusade in the literary realm as well and became the nation's most prolific writer on the theme. Significantly, although their plotlines sometimes included some discussion of immigrant white slaves, white slavery was on the American-born girl and on the ruinous influence of urban life on country girls who came to the cities. This theme was infallibly treated according to the structure of the melodrama, with its intensified effects and sensational overtones but also, following John Cawelti's definition, with the specific purpose of reinforcing the "essential rightness" of the traditional moral order.[49] Considering the transformation of slavery as a trope from black chattel slavery to prostitution as white slavery, one could argue that a certain melodramatic mode informs the whole process. If melodrama tends to simplify the "complex ambiguities and tragedies of the world"[50] in order to reinstate the hero that most represents the morality of a given period, then, in its general significance, white slavery melodramas can be said to reinstate the collective white hero of genteel America as a paladin of lost rural innocence and social justice.

DEFENDING WHITENESS

Displaced to the mythical realm, the “alienated” concept of slavery acquires a sort of ubiquity, becoming at once “intellective and imaginary, arbitrary and natural.”[51] This usage of race bondage did not overwrite but rather stirred the sexual unconscious of slavery; more precisely, it unchained the accumulated memories of violence and prejudice through which the black body had been sexually coded and through which its gendered expressions had been imprinted in the white imaginary. Between 1830 and 1860 the comparison between wage labor and chattel slavery was voiced in a fashion that was as insistent as it was embarrassing. While chattel slavery obviously stood for a denial of liberty, blackness symbolized a peculiar form of degradation. As Roediger puts it, “racism, slavery and republicanism combined to require comparisons of hirelings and slaves, but the combination also required white workers to distance themselves from Blacks even while the comparisons were being made.”[52] Genteel factory women in particular seemed to find the term loathsome, and all the more so because of the silent association with the sexual exploitation inherent in the plantation economy.[53]

The endorsement of a slavery discourse in the context of female factory work tended to question the notion of propriety in a way that male work did not. Two apparently distinct examples highlight this subtext. When, in the 1840s, reformer Orestes Brownson called female factory workers the “white slaves of the North,” his definition expressed less his condemnation of the manufacturers than his pity for girls persisting in a “mentally stultifying, physically unhealthy, and morally ruinous” activity that made them virtually unmarriageable.[54] Almost seventy years later, the labor organizer Clara Lemlich adopted the same analogy in her article “Why Waistmakers Strike.”[55] Among other things, she lamented that “they [the bosses in the shops] yell at the girls and they ‘call them down’ even worse than I imagine Negro slaves were in the South.” Recent studies on the atmosphere of sexual danger pervading the factories of the Progressive Era invite us to think that among the insults to which Lemlich was alluding were also sexual abuses that women of the time did not have sufficient language to denounce.[56] “To work like a slave” might as well have been common parlance,[57]

yet it is clear in both of these cases that slavery was used to suggest and condemn the unacceptable association between the ideally dignified nature of "girls" and their factual reduction to sexually endangered and socially ostracized "slaves." The scandalous realization should activate the audience's emotions to the highest degree, and stimulate action.

In such denunciatory contexts, both Brownson, an external observer, and Lemlich, a toiling laborer herself, adopted slavery as a trope that did not entail a sympathetic understanding of the black cause. On the contrary, they practiced an oppositional rhetoric that functioned according to a dynamic of "strategic self-othering"[58] made possible by the fact that "throughout the modern period, the semiotic stability of the nodal system in racist ideology had been undermined and thrown in a state of dialectical flux."[59] Within this logic of concurrent association and distancing, male immigrants of diverse descent apprehended the identification of themselves with slaves as a sort of residual taboo, though one that emanated from the fear of identification with blackness, rather than a fear of identification with chattel.[60] The turn-of-the-century discussion about wage slavery did not necessarily dismiss the seriousness of chattel slavery, but it certainly made claims to full whiteness on the part of immigrant workers who cast their black counterparts far beyond the pale of solidarity. The inclination toward white supremacy implied in some pro-labor arguments becomes apparent in the numerous frightening depictions of the "black strikebreakers," most famous among them a Dantesque scene in Sinclair's *The Jungle*.[61] This category was presented in opposition to organized labor and discredited through what Eugene Leach labels the "mob stigma" as well as through a rhetoric of exceptional sexual debauchery.[62] In short, if the usage of the trope "slavery" for labor or sexual exploitation was efficient in voicing ineffable outrage when predicated of white subjects, it needed to be sexually sanitized and recast with the notion of restraint for men and purity for women.

This redefinition and contextual defense of whiteness was not an enterprise limited to the world of labor. Its salience was fostered by several other factors; prominent among them was the American imperialist adventure. Already in the 1950s, John Higham was pointing

out that “the reaction from imperial euphoria brought back the vague fears of the nineties about the Anglo-Saxons’ stamina.”[63] The entry of Filipinos and other people of color into the population increased the degree of complexity along which society perceived skin color hierarchies. This new configuration also allowed some groups—most famously the Irish, the Italians, and the Jews—to make claims to whiteness in a way that had been, up to that point, impossible. As Higham put it, the nationalist feelings generated by the Spanish-American War enabled “the guardians of white supremacy to discharge their feelings on new foreign groups.”[64] The victories of 1898 spread a revived and jubilant Anglo-Saxonism across the country so that, not at all coincidentally, “the period of overseas expansions coincided with a general tightening of the race lines” in the southern states. In other words, from “the crucible of the empire” a certain homogenization reverberated across the country. As Matthew Frye Jacobson reports, a journalist commented in 1898 that it was “partly by juxtaposition to the ‘small black morsel’ of Hawaii that the Celtic community in the United States became so comfortably Caucasian.”[65] About a decade later, before a House committee, it is from the voice of a Texan congressman that not only the Irish, but all the members of the “light-haired, blue eyed” nations of Europe are declared “Pure Caucasians” and therefore inherently deemed capable of self-government.[66]

The convergence of race and fitness for self-government encroaches on a class distinction in such a way that the Progressive Era “witnessed a fracturing of whiteness into a hierarchy of a plural and scientifically determined white race.”[67] The mosaic of Caucasianism featured abundant internal divisions that often mimicked the old ideological parameters that separated whites from blacks. Once color alone ceased to be a reliable descriptor, class markers and “fitness” for self-governance assumed prominence, and old master-slave narratives were revisited in order to define or abolish new distinctions. As Jackson Lears intimates, “the rising significance of race” in the Progressive Era deepened its roots in the socio-economic realm as part of a broader impulse to seek certainties.[68] Among these longed-for certainties one can count the ideal of female purity that the white slavery hysteria

seemed both to mourn and to reestablish. The domestic Victorianism underlying this ideal was far from being merely nostalgic. Revisited in the light of American imperialism, it pointed at the structural opposition signified in the separation of spheres that defined the domestic, according to Amy Kaplan, not as opposed to the public, but rather as opposed to the foreign: "When we oppose the domestic to the foreign, men and women will become national allies against the alien, and the determining division is not gender but the racial demarcation of otherness."[69] From this perspective, as the sentimental novels of the 1850s showed a connection between women and domesticity "defining the contours of the nation and its shifting borders with the foreign," so the different treatments of prostitution in the 1910s exposed the intricate means by which the discourse on female purity generated and relied on images of the foreign.[70]

PERSPECTIVES AND CHAPTERS

The texts analyzed throughout this book all entertain the possibility, the certainty, or the fear that "woman" might be the site of potential disorder. In fact, all the women populating or even authoring these texts could be called, for different reasons, wayward, and they present feminine behaviors opposed and resistant to what was considered proper feminine demeanor. While making no claim to being an exhaustive selection, these primary sources were chosen because each one of them made a significant contribution to the formation of this discourse on womanhood and social change. The selection also privileges works and documents that have received to date less critical attention than they deserve. In the resulting gallery of novels, plays, movies, memoirs, reformative writings, legal documents, and works of art, New Women and white slaves appear center stage and often mirror each other, revealing the hinges of Progressive America. Performance analysis, Shannon Jackson argues, "incorporates critical theory of social interaction, of the relationship between space and subjectivity, of human behavior as signifying practice."[71] For this reason, this mode of inquiry provides a capacious framework for approaching the pragmatic configuration of change during the age of reform, a time whose

contradictions and complexities risked overriding its civic lessons, but whose *events* established the possibility of new relations to democracy. The *event*, as Stephen Foster contends, both makes things happen and enables ways of understanding what has happened independently of its "relative or absolute importance;" its significance lies instead in its being part of a particular history, and "an important basis of its explanatory power."[72] Following this definition, canonical authors and landmark occurrences will be investigated next to micro-histories and relatively unsuccessful works to observe the plurality of Progressivism in the making.

While Erving Goffman has made the structural dynamic of theatrical events crucial for the understanding of human behavior and society, J. L. Austin has brought to the fore the creative force of performative speech acts: this double lesson, supplemented with David Roman's idea of "performance as a practice fully capable of enacting cultural critique within multiple public spheres," is constantly reexamined in my case studies. I have drawn explicitly on a variety of thinkers whose ideas or examples I have bent into instruments of analysis. Daniel Bell's notion of disjunctive society has prompted my historicization of anxiety as a cultural motor while historians such as Martha Banta, Carrol Smith-Rosenberg, and Celia Tichi have shaped my approach to women's experience during Progressivism in working and social environments. I have turned to Jane Tompkins and Lauren Berlant for the economy of the sentimental and to Roland Barthes for the mechanisms of modern mythologies. Wai Chee Dimock and Pamela Haag have been key in informing my understanding of the negotiations of justice in the Progressive Era. From Kevin Mumford and Brian Donovan I have drawn inspiration for my analysis of the sexualization of the color line in the urban environment. Finally, Arlie Russel Hochschield's observations on emotional labor and Priscilla Wald's study of outbreak narratives have offered great inspiration for my interpretation of dramatic material.

Although women are a privileged object of investigation, this book is intended neither as a study of female delinquency, nor as a survey of white slave literature, nor as a taxonomy of Progressive female types. It is rather a work of cultural history in which wayward women, are

explored as catalysts of growing anxieties concerning the personal, social, political, and racial crises that shaped this era of transition and the Progressive response to it. Like a French braid whose strands are gathered and woven together with the inclusion of ever-new additions, my argument will continually add new material to three main thematic strands—Progressivism, prostitution, and the woman's question—intertwining analyses of the selected texts around these three topics in an order that, although culminating with World War I, will elude a straightforward chronology. Each chapter focuses on one Progressive theme that saw wayward women as protagonists, examining it through the juxtaposition of a few main examples of this female incarnation, be they fictional or historical.

The book starts in *medias res* with a tribute to the primacy of doing and acting out through the body to access the public sphere: chapter 1, "Performing Dissent," offers an analysis of the performative ways in which two iconic types of New Women, the suffragists and the strikers, assailed the public sphere to put forth their claims. Their symbolic waywardness—their fighting for full inclusion as citizens of the nation-state or for social justice in the negotiations of paid labor—was punished very literally and with measures that stressed gender disparity as well as the force of the prejudice that associated women in public with immorality. I address in particular the last phases of the fight for voting rights, examining some suffrage and anti-suffrage films as well as the 1920 memoir *Jailed for Freedom*, authored by a prominent activist. Particular emphasis is placed on the movement's penchant for theatricality and on the tactics of passive resistance enacted by the National Woman's Party. As for the labor movement, I recast the New York strikes of 1909–1910 in the light of Theresa Malkiel's *Diary of a Shirtwaist Striker* and discuss the association between working women and morality as pictured in some labor films and in Edward Sheldon's play *The High Road*.

Zooming in on the white slavery scare, I follow its patterns of repetition in the two following chapters, showing how the trope of slavery, once severed from its Middle Passage legacy and applied to white subjects, became functional in transferring the paternalistic belief that black people were unfit for self-governance first onto the working

and immigrant classes and then, when the white slavery craze gained momentum, onto American-born, white women—regardless of their class. At the same time, I underscore how the creative force of the white slavery metaphor overflowed from the social to the legal realm, thus compounding the myth into new juridical precedents and legal subjects. Chapter 2, "Girls Who Act Up," brings together a novel in which Harriet Beecher Stowe's black heroines are rewritten as fallen tenement girls with Jane Addams's writings on white slavery and urban youth. In the works of these authors, the wayward ghetto woman and the wayward city girl, respectively, are objects of reform represented through the lens of abolition. Alice Wellington Rollins's *Uncle Tom's Tenement* (1888) provides an eloquent example of how the superimposition of chattel slavery and immigrant wage slavery was accomplished in the literary and social imaginary. Recast through abolitionist themes and rhetoric, Rollins's Irish immigrants are the victims of a new form of slavery generated by irresponsible capitalism. Their plight exposes the inefficacy of desultory reform efforts based on erroneous assumptions of intimacy and becomes particularly cogent in Rollins's treatment of the sexual vulnerability of female immigrants. As a more directly Progressive counterpoint, Addams's writings on vice reform also pivot on abolition but posit the historical abolition of chattel slavery as the ideal referent that should foster the complete eradication of prostitution through the legislative initiatives that proliferated in the 1910s. In this framework, a nonetheless effective reform model based on embodied care and cross-class proximity reveals the ideological pitfalls inherent in reform work, especially conspicuous when wayward girls—black and white—are perceived as completely deprived of agency and autonomy.

Moving from the social settlement's approach to white slavery to the methods deployed by the committees of notables who handled social problems with an eye to the political machine, chapter 3, "In the Theater of Justice," dwells on legal discourse. The law is here depicted as the field in which the private concerns voiced by certain anti-vice reformers managed to shape a powerful and lasting legislative agenda. Through the emphasis on adjudication and legislation I wish to illuminate several implications of the search for moral order as they emerged in the vicissitudes of two historical wayward women: Belle

Moore, the defendant in the white slavery trial of 1910 *People v. Belle Moore*, and Belle Schreiber, the key witness in the white slavery trial that ended with the sentencing of Jack Johnson, the first black heavyweight champion in the history of boxing. Traversed by interlocking debates on gender, sexuality, and race, the two trials consolidated the conjunction of whiteness and innocence in the figure of the sexual slave, while turning the metaphoric slaveholder from vaguely ethnic to completely racialized. This covert dynamic, taking place against the background of the undercover investigations in the slumming underworld, foreshadows the preoccupations with miscegenation, the erasure of female sexual consent, and the resegregational impulse that surfaced in the passing and early enforcement of the White-Slave Traffic Act.

Following these treatments of reform literature and practices according to the principles of performativity, I turn to performance as practiced in the theater and look at the interactions between reform, the white slavery scare, and the theatrical vogues of the period. This section counters the "anti-theatrical prejudice" that links the theater with degraded, or, as J. L. Austin put it, "etiolated" forms of the performative. [73] Choosing a few significant plays from the flourishing "brothel drama" productions that stormed Broadway in the 1910s—plays that are today mostly forgotten as well as unpublished—I will discuss the feminization of prostitution reform and the acting out of social hygiene on the New York stage. Chapter 4, "Staging Waywardness," offers an analysis of Rachel Crothers's *Ourselves*, the only original "brothel play" written by a woman and produced on Broadway during the "white slavery season" of 1913–1914. Invigorating her audiences' melodramatic taste with a compositional clarity inspired by nascent realism, Crothers brought to the fore the paradox of the female condition under Progressivism, with its growing autonomy and subtle restrictions. In an age in which both the stage and the movie industry popularized the normative equation between "lost" and "wayward" women, Crothers created the character of a prostitute that countered the conservative trend of prostitution stories with a condemnation of the double standard and an insightful critique of reform practices. Crothers's reinvention of the white slavery theme revealed a society highly divided on the notion of moral regeneration

and defied simplistic notions of female solidarity while making the wayward subject the mediator of conflicting assumptions about gender roles.

In the second decade of the twentieth century, the conjunction between medicine and reform was historically defined by the rise of social hygiene. Chapter 5, "Staging Remedies," explores the ensuing correlation between social reform, the anti-vice debate, and the fight against venereal diseases in prostitution plays that focus on "sanitarians." Through a study of Eugene Walter's *The Knife* and Eugène Brieux's *Damaged Goods*, this chapter considers the theater both as a mirror and as a didactic instrument of the medicalization of reform. In this period, the stage became the crucial site for the development of white slavery stories into "outbreak narratives" that, in the wake of World War I, helped implement a military program to combat venereal disease known as the "American Plan." Initially conceived to sanitize and moralize a syphilis-plagued army, the initiative spread into a wide-ranging regulatory apparatus that harshly curtailed women's civil liberties.

The thin thread connecting chattel slavery to white slavery unraveled throughout the Gilded Age into the Progressive Era. As women came to be responsible for some of the most important democratic reforms of the age, they could no longer be seen under the white slave paradigm as vulnerable victims; but it was also in this period that women suffered a backlash in the form of a redrawing and reassertion of the patriarchal public-private boundaries that had long structured political thought, law, and practice. The New Women and the white slaves populating every chapter in this study are sometimes in direct contradiction, sometimes act in solidarity, and sometimes inhabit each other's subconscious, but together they substantially inform and exceed the "woman's sphere," teetering inside and outside its ever-shifting borders.

NOTES

1. For a critical review of historians' treatment of Progressive reform see Robert D. Johnston, "Re-Democratizing the Progressive Era: The Politics of

Progressive Era Historiography," *Journal of the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era* 1, no. 1 (2002).

2. Throughout the book I have capitalized the term Progressive in reference to reformers who characterized the Progressive Era as well as to their beliefs, politics, and times. The term is lowercased in reference to a general belief in progress. The epithet New Woman is capitalized while the locution "white slave" and "white slavery" are lowercased, following the norms of most scholarly literature on the subject.

3. Deanna Shemek used this extended notion of female waywardness to produce an interesting study of fictional and historical women of the Italian Renaissance. Deanna Shemek, *Ladies Errant: Wayward Women and Social Order in Early Modern Italy* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 1–2.

4. Ibid.

5. Anne M. Boylan, "Claiming Visibility: Women in Public/Public Women in the United States, 1865–1910," in Jane Floyd et al., eds., *Becoming Visible: Women's Presence in Late Nineteenth-Century America* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2010), 17. See also Linda Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," *The Journal of American History* 75, no. 1 (1988): 9.

6. Rosalind Rosenberg, *Beyond Separate Spheres: Intellectual Roots of Modern Feminism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1983).

7. Martha H. Patterson, *Beyond the Gibson Girl: Reimagining the American New Woman, 1895–1015* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 3–4.

8. The "Rebel Girl" was the title of a popular song by Joe Hill, purportedly composed for and dedicated to Elizabeth Gurley Finn (1890–1964), a labor leader, activist, and feminist who played a leading role in the Industrial Workers of the World. Christine Stansell, *American Moderns: Bohemian New York and the Creation of a New Century* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2000), 237.

9. Cf. Elizabeth Alice Clement, *Love for Sale: Courting, Treating, and Prostitution in New York City, 1900 – 1945* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

10. Cf. Ann Heilmann, *New Woman Strategies: Sarah Grand, Olive Schreiner, Mona Caird* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004);

and Patterson, *Beyond the Gibson Girl*.
11. Mark T. Connelly, *The Response to Prostitution in the United States* (Chapel Hill: The University of Carolina Press, 1980), 6.
12. John Higham, "The Reorientation of American Culture in the 1890s," in *Writing American History: Essays on Modern Scholarship* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970), 79.
13. Martha Banta, *Taylored Lives: Narrative Productions in the Age of Taylor, Veblen and Ford* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 47–49.
14. Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1978), 8, 10.
15. Daniel T. Rodgers, "In Search of Progressivism," *Reviews in American History* 10, no. 4 (1982): 115–6.
16. Judith A. Allen, *The Feminism of Charlotte Perkins Gilman* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 4. See also Nancy Cohen, *The Reconstruction of American Liberalism 1865-1914* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossing: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1998); Leon Fink, *Progressive Intellectuals and the Dilemmas of Democratic Commitment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); Eldon J. Eisenach, *The Lost Promise of Progressivism* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1994); and Steven J. Diner, *A Very Different Age* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998).
17. Paul Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 1820–1920* (1967; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 220.
18. Rogers M. Smith, *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in US History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), 412.
19. For a different critical reading of this dichotomy see Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).
20. Nathan G. Hale, *Freud and the Americans: The Beginnings of Psychoanalysis in the United States; 1876–1917* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971).
21. "'Civilized' morality was, above all, an ideal of conduct, not a description of reality. In many respects this moral system was a heroic attempt to coerce a recalcitrant and hostile actuality." Ibid., 25.

22. The Clark Conference was a decisive event in the history of psychoanalysis in America: Freud had been invited to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of Clark University and he delivered his *Five Lectures on Psychoanalysis* from September 7 through September 11. The lectures, a condensation of the major theories he had worked out in his first works, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, *Three Contribution to a Theory of Sex*, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, and *Studies in Hysteria*, were published in Hall's *American Journal of Psychology* soon afterward.
23. Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820–1860," *American Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (1966). For a recent discussion on the topic Cf. Tracy Fessenden, "Gendering Religion," *Journal of Women's History* 14, no. 1 (2002); Mary Louise Roberts, "True Womanhood Revisited," *Journal of Women's History* 14, no. 1 (2002); and Nancy A. Hewitt, "Taking the True Woman Hostage," *Journal of Women's History* 14, no. 1 (2002).
24. Connelly, *The Response to Prostitution*, 7.
25. Ruth Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in America, 1900–1918* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1982), 113–14.
26. Edward Bristow, *Prostitution and Prejudice: The Jewish Fight against White Slavery 1870-1939* (New York: Schocken Books, 1983).
27. As Connelly observes in his survey of white slavery tracts, almost all the tracts included a discussion of the plight of migrant white slaves but with a distinct emphasis on the threat to American-born girls. Connelly, *The Response to Prostitution*, 116–202.
28. David Pivar, *Purity Crusades: Sexual Morality and Social Control 1868–1900* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1973), 85.
29. In *Traffic in Young Girls*, WCTU official Charlton Edholm testified that an "organized traffic in young girls is constantly going on and that worse than any race-slavery is the slavery of the brothel." Charlton Edholm, *Traffic in Girls and Florence Crittenton Missions* (Chicago: 1893), 9.
30. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (1957; New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 118–19.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid., 119.
33. Ibid., 110.
34. Cf. Connelly, *The Response to Prostitution*; and Frederick K. Grittner, *White Slavery: Myth, Ideology and American Law* (New York and London:

Garland Publishing, Inc., 1990). In *White Slaves, African Masters*, historian Paul Baepler has anthologized and studied another precursor of this genre: the so-called Barbary captivity narrative, in which American citizens describe life as a slave of the Algerian and Moroccan pashas, rulers of the Barbary Coast. In their time, these writings were widely circulated, but there seems to be no direct literary connection between the prostitution white slave narratives and this body of writing. See Paul Baepler, ed., *White Slaves, African Masters: An Anthology of Barbary Captivity Narratives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

35. Sharon Wood draws a similar genealogical correlation between the rise of paid work for women and the establishment of the white slave as a sexually exploited female captive. Sharon Wood, *The Freedom of the Streets: Work, Citizenship, and Sexuality in a Gilded Age City* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 7–8.

36. Roediger indicates Cunliffe for further discussion: Marcus Cunliffe, *Chattel Slavery and Wage Slavery* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1979). See David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London and New York: Verso, 1991), 27.

37. Robert W. Fogel, *Without Consent or Contract: The Rise and Fall of American Slavery*, New York 1989, 354–69; as quoted in Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness*, 81.

38. Mara L. Keire, "The Vice Trust: A Reinterpretation of the White Slavery Scare in the United States," *Journal of Social History* 35, no. 1 (2001): 7.

39. Stephen Robertson, "Age of Consent Law and the Making of Modern Childhood in New York City, 1886–1921," *Journal of Social History* 35, no. 4 (2002): 784.

40. "The White Slave Trade," in *Transactions of the International Congress on the White Slave Trade* (London: 1899, 156–54) as quoted in Grittner, *White Slavery*, 53.

41. See Ibid., 51.

42. The beginning of the white slavery scare can arguably be dated to 1909. Toward the end of the year one of the most influential articles that inaugurated sensationalism as a trademark of the anti-vice campaigns appeared in McClure's Magazine penned by muckraking journalist

George Kibbe Turner. George Kibbe Turner, “The Daughters of the Poor: A Plain Story of the Development of New York City as a Leading Centre of the White Slave Trade of the World under Tammany Hall,” *McClure’s Magazine* 34, November (1909).
43. Cf. Werner Sollors, “Immigrants and Other Americans,” in *Columbia Literary History of the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 582–83.
44. Scott Herring, *Queering the Underworld. Slumming, Literature and the Undoing of Lesbian and Gay History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 4.
45. Laura Hapke, *Girls Who Went Wrong: Prostitutes in American Fiction, 1885–1917* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1989).
46. Connelly, *The Response to Prostitution*, 115.
47. Other writers who created, with less success, fiction centered on prostitution were Frank Norris (*Vandover and the Brute*, 1894–1914), Walter Hurt (*The Scarlet Shadow*, 1907) and Estelle Baker (*The Rose Door*, 1911). There was in addition a very limited production of American pornography that featured the prostitute but, given the constraints of the genre, it did not constitute a contribution to the discussion of prostitution as a social issue. See Hapke, *Girls Who Went Wrong*, 4–5.
48. Some exemplary works are: Jean Turner Zimmermann, *American’s Black Traffic in White Girls* (1912); Robert J. Moorehead, *Fighting the Devil’s Triple Demons* (1911); Mrs. C. I. Harris, *Modern Herodians or Slaughterers of Innocents* (1909); E. Norine Law, *The Shame of a Great Nation* (1909); and Virginia Brooks, *My Battles with Vice* (1915). See Connelly, *The Response to Prostitution*, 202.
49. John G. Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976), 44–47.
50. Ibid., 45.
51. Ibid.
52. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness*, 66.
53. Ibid., 85.
54. Julie Husband and Jim O’Loughlin, *Daily Life in the Industrial U.S., 1870–1900* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004), 118.

55. Quoted in Nan Enstad, *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 234.
56. Daniel E. Bender, "Too Much of Distasteful Masculinity," *Journal of Women's History* 15, no. 4 (2004): 91.
57. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness*, 144–45. Also see Julie Husband, "'The White Slavery of the North': Lowell Mill Women and the Reproduction of 'Free' Labor," *Legacy* 16, no. 1 (1999): 11–21; and Laura Hapke, "A Shop Is Not a Home: Nineteenth Century American Sweatshop Discourse," *American Nineteenth Century History* 2, no. 3 (2001): 49.
58. Kobena Mercer, *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 301.
59. Ibid., 294.
60. More generally, a lot of historical work produced in the late 1990s has investigated the mechanisms of constructed whiteness as implemented by ethnic groups that, at their arrival in the United States, were not counted as whites. For an overview on "whiteness studies" see Peter Kolchin, "Whiteness Studies: The New History of Race in America," *The Journal of American History* 89, no. 1 (2002).
61. Cf. Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle* (1906; New York: Signet Classics, 2001), 313. The sense of disorder associated with the black strikebreaker borders on fears of miscegenation conveyed through allusion to sexual potency and venereal infection. Also see Michael J. Duvall, "Processes of Elimination: Progressive Era Hygienic Ideology, Waste, and Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*," *American Studies* 43, no. 3 (2002).
62. On the black strikebreaker see Eugene Leach, "Chaining the Tiger: The Mob Stigma and the Working Class, 1863–1894," *Labor History* 35, no. 2 (1994); Mark Noon, "'It Ain't Your Color, It's Your Scabbing,'" *African American Review* 38, no. 3 (2004); and Eric Arnesen, "Specter of the Black Strikebreaker: Race, Employment, and Labor Activism in the Industrial Era," *Labor History* 44, no. 3 (2003).
63. John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism 1860–1925* (1955; New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 146.
64. Ibid., 169.
65. Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University

Press, 1998), 204.
66. Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 171.
67. Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 7.
68. More specifically Lears suggests that "modern racism provided . . . solidity to personal identity, in a secularizing market society where most forms of identity were malleable and up for sale." T. J. Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877–1920* (New York: Harper Collins, 2009), 93.
69. Amy Kaplan, "Manifest Domesticity," *American Literature* 70, no. 3 (1998): 582.
70. Ibid., 582–91.
71. Shannon Jackson, *Lines of Activity: Performance, Historiography, Hull-House Domesticity* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2000), 8–9. For a wider theoretical contextualization see Shannon Jackson, *Professing Performance: Theatre in the Academy from Philology to Performativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
72. Stephen Foster, "Event Structures and Art Situations," in Stephen Foster, ed., *"Event" Arts and Art Events* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1988), 6.
73. J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (1962; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 21–22.

Chapter 1

Performing Dissent: New Women Go Public

> I'm not a Quaker, not a non-resistant. Both on my father's side, as well as my mother's, I inherit plenty of the spirit of '76. My great-grandmother loaded guns, and if she did not kill anyone it was because she was the proverbial bad shot. . . . My Grandmother taught me to admire the courage, the devotion and the patriotism of my maternal ancestor.
> —Harriot Stanton Blatch, *Women's Political World*, 1917

On an early December afternoon in 1909, a procession of about 2,000 women made its way from Lower Manhattan to New York City Hall carrying a written protest for Mayor George B. McClellan. The parade was headed by a squad of mounted police and guarded at the sides by walking officers. It must have struck the casual viewer as odd that some banners waving above the procession condemned the abusive treatment that the police apparently reserved for protesting women. Among the delegation that left the parade to meet the mayor, three women had spent part of the previous month in jail on preposterous charges. Their formal letter lamented that many like them had suffered "insults, intimidations and abuses" at the hands of the police during their perfectly lawful picketing in the garment district. Although the marchers were some of the approximately 20,000 shirtwaist workers who had joined, two weeks before, a general strike of unprecedented proportions, many of the women in the parade that day had never actually known the hardships of sweatshop labor. Indeed, the fact that that specific demonstration received two full columns in the *New York Times* was probably due to the "suffragettes" at its forefront, who, in their support of the strikers, "had outdistanced even the Socialist."[1]

The suffrage movement is generally considered the key historical context that shaped the rise of the New Woman,[2] but it was the parallel entrance of women en masse into the paid workforce that

evinced the great change in women's lives, especially white women's lives, that New Womanhood epitomized.[3] Compared to its relationship with other reform movements, such as, for example, temperance—which the suffrage movement easily incorporated[4] —the suffragists' relationship with the reform of labor was contradictory, discontinuous and problematic.[5] Labor activists and suffragists fought side by side only for brief episodes of their respective battles and the New York shirtwaist strike of 1909 was one of the few salient events in which the two groups joined forces—only to split almost immediately over the negotiations that would draw the unrest to a close. The synergy that made such cooperation possible was a peculiar New York product and owed much to the preparatory work of certain fringes of the suffrage movement devoted to providing a strong working-class foundation for the cause. Whereas the initial phases of the strike celebrated this cooperation, its outcome marked the deterioration of the alliance between upper-class suffragists and labor organizers, giving way to a recrudescence of the class divide separating the two causes, even though female supporters on both sides shared a firm belief in the still fresh principles of feminism, common activists, and common opponents.

Instead of detailing the circumstances that favored or hindered cross-class cooperation in the context of the suffrage and labor campaigns, this chapter will examine this fleeting rapport through each group's activities of performative dissent. These practices revealed the shifting common ground shared by suffragists and workers even as they staked their claims separately. For example, the patience of the public authorities with female protesters occupying public spaces reached its end for both groups, with incarcerations following the arrest of the picketers. In these instances both the strikers and the suffragists had their lawful acts of civic waywardness punished as crimes. The different degrees of scandal aroused in public opinion by these sentences reflected the class origins of the women engaged in the performances of dissent. Similarly, class, and to a minor extent ethnicity, determined the level of daring of the respective actions. In the suffrage campaign, groups such as the Women's Political Union revived the battle exploiting all forms of modern mass communication while radical divisions like the

National Woman's Party staged increasingly aggressive forms of "occupation" ranging from mass meetings to picketing and hunger strikes.[6] As for the labor movement, the strikers' taking to the streets just when the suffragists began their marches had different undertones—and much less choreography. The textile workers walked off their jobs in an action that the wider society recognized as political, although many were probably unconscious of this fact. They went on strike not only in New York City but also in Chicago, Rochester, Cleveland, and other cities, making similar demands, challenging the police, and turning to middle-class women for support. In the oft-told story of the shirtwaist strike, the degree to which the transformation of the New York suffrage movement contributed to its outcome is hardly ever mentioned.[7] In the same way, the correlation between the tactics adopted by the suffragists and labor protesters remains underappreciated. Interpreting the final, militant phase of the suffrage campaign and the New York shirtwaist strikes as class-inflected manifestations of what Jill Dolan theorizes as the "utopian performative" allows us to address a gap in existing criticism that usually juxtaposes these groups of women as irreparably distant. That might be sadly true, but their strategies in embracing or rejecting waywardness tell us more about New Womanhood and its political contours.

SUFFRAGE AND THE VISUAL TURN

By the beginning of the new century, defensive strategies and sophisticated elitism had rendered woman's suffrage a stuffy cause that, in Harriot Stanton Blatch's famous words, "bored its adherents and repelled its opponents."[8] And yet for half of the previous century American women suffragists had not been idle: they had suffered defeats and humiliations; they had rethought their strategies constantly; and established organizations that, albeit in disagreement on numerous issues, gradually radicalized female "symbolic conduct"[9] as a performance of civic mindedness. The supra-verbal repertoire of suffrage, which had begun immediately after the Civil War, grew wider and bolder as the decades progressed—to the point that activists, ridiculed as "rampant women," constantly faced the accusation of being

“unsexed monsters.”[10] The pervasiveness of this myth led the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) to oppose politically vehement demonstrations, to preserve the suffragists’ upper-class respectability in the public eye.[11] No wonder Blatch was so unapologetic: she had inherited the uncompromising temper of her principled mother, suffrage icon Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Harriot’s marriage to an Englishman—and the consequent loss of her American citizenship—only made her a more ardent militant, as during her twenty years in Great Britain she became involved with Fabian socialism and was active in Emmeline Pankhurst’s early suffrage organization, the Women’s Franchise League. For a long time British suffrage activists had appeared more cautious and conservative than their American counterparts. In the new century, however, the legendary women of the Pankhurst family instigated a new militancy by introducing tactics typical of the labor and Irish independence movements, such as street-corner speaking, processions, civil disobedience, arson, and physical attacks on prominent politicians. While most American activists were doubtful of such methods,[12] a number of U.S. suffragists had been involved in these agitations overseas and drew inspiration from their experiences to revive the combative tradition of the American Women Suffrage Association (AWSA).[13] Given Blatch’s pedigree and experience, her contribution to the American suffrage movement was a unique brand of activism at once steeped in the strong belief in the inclusion of working women in the suffrage constituency and informed by a daringly modern attitude toward performative dissent practices. Leaving the labor issue temporarily aside, in this section I will explore the visual turn in the suffrage campaign that Blatch promoted, focusing especially on film. The nuances and contradictions of this new phase of the suffrage movement will emerge as tied to an understanding of acting and impersonation as a new frontier of political presence, a frontier later pushed farther by Alice Paul’s National Woman’s Party.

On her return to the United States, Blatch immediately enacted her vision of a comprehensive suffrage organization by founding the Equality League of Self-Supporting Women—later renamed the Women’s Political Union (WPU)—in 1907.[14] Resolved to return suffrage to the public

agenda in America, Blatch inaugurated the tradition of sending “silent sentinels” to administrative buildings and began to lead ever more spectacular suffrage marches in New York. Central to her strategy was to make suffrage newsworthy, embracing all attention without regard for any derisive criticism. In keeping with her motto “blessed be ridicule,” Blatch pursued all the methods of the advertising age: her young recruits placed large billboards on city streets, prepared designer’s postcards, and displayed themselves in shop windows with suffrage banners as *mannequins vivants*.[15] As the attraction between the suffragists and the world of advertising became mutual, the public began to entertain the idea that anything so acceptable in a consumer society could not be that harmful to democracy.[16] Even the old-time prejudice that held actresses as somewhat disreputable was swept away when the movement capitalized on a flourishing celebrity culture and enlisted a number of well-known actresses as both experienced public speakers and models of desirable femininity. As “female performers became agents and metaphors of changing gender relations,”[17] the WPU turned confidently to the silver screen as a new medium through which the suffrage message could reach vast audiences.

The first decade of the twentieth century may not have seen much progress among suffragists, but it saw burgeoning activity among their opponents, especially in the movies. Large-screen motion picture projection was introduced in 1896; as early as 1898, the short film *The Lady Barber* had already ridiculed the suffragist movement.[18] According to film historians, a “tide of comic shorts” followed; apparently few film humorists could resist the temptation to parody female enfranchisement.[19] Both in the United States and in Europe, the expression of resistance to the entrance of women into politics produced caricatures of female activists and variations on the theme of gender role reversal.[20] There were many mocking comedies in which suffragists proved incapable of living up to their purported skills once they obtained power;[21] comedies and melodramas in which the inclusion of women in public life produces drastic, though often hilarious, results for the family; and shocking films that presented suffrage demonstrations as

spectacles of hysteria, dangerous excesses of violent delinquents, or eroticized spectacles meant to please the male audience.[22]

Inspired by the British suffragettes,[23] American activists returned fire in the movie houses. Between 1912 and 1914, both the conservative NAWSA and Blatch's WPU released films starring attractive, young suffragists who combined political passion with romantic and familial success. In 1912, the WPU produced *Suffrage Wins Herbert*, a romantic comedy released as *Suffrage and the Man*, which inaugurated the practice of interposing brief cameos of suffrage leaders who played themselves, thus piercing the boundaries between theatrical performance and real life.[24] The film mixed the lighthearted fictional plot of a suffragist girl who wins back her skeptical fiancé with appearances of real-life militants. This juxtaposition of fiction and non-fiction contributed to the development of the new "cinema of narrative integration," a mode in which the increasingly complicated depiction of time and space on the screen enabled the accommodation of otherwise extemporaneous propaganda messages.[25] Of the two most prominent suffrage films appearing in 1912, *Votes for Women* created the biggest sensation, possibly due more to the fact that Reliance Film convinced the NAWSA leaders Anna Howard Shaw and Jane Addams to appear in the film, confident that the charisma and popularity of the two activists would attract even that portion of the audience usually inclined toward anti-feminist sentiment. Suffrage and the film industry met halfway: the industry understood the entertainment potential of the suffrage movement while its leaders, even those such as Addams, who had traditionally opposed the new medium, accepted its possibilities.

Exploiting the nascent fashion, the WPU soon produced its own melodrama, a four-reeler entitled *Eighty Million Women Want—?*[26] With the exception of Shelley Stamp's study, film criticism often describes the film as a rather confusing work, mentioning it less for its script than for its usage of documentary footage and its inclusion of both Emmeline Pankhurst and Harriot Stanton Blatch.[27] Yet the extant literature fails to address how this film, more than any other suffrage motion picture, establishes movie theaters—and implicitly other spaces of performance—as superior sites for the negotiation of public meaning. *Eighty Million*

posits the suffragist as a citizen-in-progress, able to make the most of the performative possibilities offered by her times. Mabel, the protagonist, is a New Woman who exploits the fluid, often risky, positions offered by the new professions based on embodiment. The top tiers of the suffrage hierarchy are not excluded from this strategy: whereas Mrs. Pankhurst is shown only at the beginning emerging from two curtains on a stage and remains a mythical presence, Blatch *acts* in several scenes throughout the movie. If the initial juxtaposition of the two female leaders hints at the transatlantic sisterhood of suffragism, the reappearance of Blatch in the headquarters of the WPU, where she welcomes new members and proceeds to educate them, underlines the accessibility of the American experience while providing an aura of authenticity to the quasi-picaresque plot.

The picaresque element, however, is crucial in showing how the power divide between corrupted male politicians and law-abiding suffragists is in flux and necessitates action to be shifted in favor of the female camp. When Mabel exposes her civic passion to her fiancé, Travers, he shows indifference. But this same apathy leads the struggling young lawyer to serve a notably corrupt New York politician named Boss Kelly. Among his many hateful doings, Kelly lampoons the suffragists on the press, organizes a ring of "repeaters" for the upcoming elections, and has the district attorney on his payroll. While Travers cannot navigate the perilous waters of New York politics and ends up in prison for a crime he has not committed, Mabel embraces the mutability of her environment, certain that her well-guarded principles will guide her safely through a whirlwind of changing identities. After debuting as a public speaker, Mabel becomes an undercover detective and, using her good looks to be hired as a secretary, spies on Boss Kelly on behalf of the WPU, collects photographic evidence of her fiancé's innocence, and neutralizes the repeaters who would certainly jeopardize the success of the suffrage amendment at the polls. At the end of the film, all the guilty characters are behind bars and Travers, now an active suffrage supporter and a free man, marries Mabel—who has never lost her delicate femininity, in spite of her spirited enterprises. For decades female activists had sought to reconcile romantic fulfillment with political engagement: in *Eighty Million* the personal is seamlessly political and the

marriage license framed in a final close-up almost doubles as a reward for the achievement of the female vote. The final shot of the film is not, however, the newlywed kiss of the blissful couple. Breaking the cinematic fourth wall just as Pankhurst did in the opening scene, the two young people about to join lips turn to the audience and stare at the viewers in expectation. Prevented from sitting back and enjoying a traditional happy ending, the spectators are forced to acknowledge the implicit exhortation of those eyes.

The utopia achieved by the two characters, only slightly elevated above reality, is suspended, ideally, to encourage the viewer to step in and cooperate. As Dolan has explained, "utopian performatives" bend the present only slightly, commanding the attention of the audience by making palpable "an affective vision of how the world might be better."[28] Yet they point to a utopia that is far from perfect, a "utopia always in process, always only partially grasped" that is never finalized within a self-determined system.[29] Thus although the world proposed in *Eighty Million* is imperfect and heavily biased, it nonetheless points to a potentially better future that women can attain through the options of modernity. Alongside the trite race-inflected arguments that emerge as a footnote in the representation of a black man in the clique of corrupt politicians, the viewer is also offered women who change public life through work, the savvy use of technology, and an active interest in the mechanisms of local politics. These New Women, whose templates Blatch encountered in the female anti-corruption movements in New York and in the Equality League,[30] are translated into the cinematic types of the actress, the detective, and the sweetheart. The resulting composite, embodied in Mabel, bears the capacity both to strengthen a precarious sisterhood and to admonish wavering men, all the while inviting the audience to respond with conviction.

Considering *Eighty Million*'s hopeful utopianism, it is quite ironic that the fourth and last suffrage film produced by NAWSA in 1914 went back to featuring women in danger and women as mothers. The film was supposed to be, in the activists' minds, the *Uncle Tom's Cabin* of suffrage.[31] The eight-reel *Your Girl and Mine*, in its attempt to avoid convoluted intellectual arguments and suffrage parades, rediscovered the

sentimental *topos* of threatened motherhood. In fact, the female protagonist—a brilliant and rich woman married to a scoundrel who dissipates her fortune and takes away her children—only enters politics in order to protect her maternal and proprietorial rights. While advocating women's voting rights on behalf of the "family vote," the melodrama spotlighted the female victim that multiple reformative traditions, from temperance to abolition, had been using for almost a century.[32]

While the representation of dystopian worlds in which women seize power and consequently wreck the order of society relied on a certain absurdist humor, two American short films anticipated with bleak sarcasm two conditions that women were to face only a few years later, in the final phases of the American suffrage campaign: incarceration as a political weapon and relentless physical violence. These two containment strategies feature prominently as legitimate, laughter-generating responses to female activism in *Pickpocket* and in *A Militant Suffragette* by Charlie Chaplin, later re-titled *A Busy Day*.[33] Chaplin's film, the more famous of the two, features the actor/director impersonating the typical ugly and brisk woman described in much anti-suffrage propaganda. Although Chaplin's masquerade particularly exaggerates the grotesqueness of the suffragist, such pantomimes were not uncommon, particularly in European movies of the period that dealt with feminism. In these fikms the suffragists' abandonment of their own convictions was quite common; the physical elimination of the "out-place" woman which concludes Chaplin's short was, however, rare. In *A Busy Day*, Chaplin impersonates a suffrage sympathizer who attends a parade with her womanizing husband. The husband flirts with a woman he meets and surreptitiously leaves with her. While searching for her spouse, the wife encounters a film director who is filming the parade and stops in front of the camera, fascinated by the idea of being filmed. A fight with the operator ensues. When the wife catches her philandering husband red-handed, a second scuffle erupts and shortly after, when she is asked to move from the speakers' backstage, a third, heavier brawl takes place, this time with the police. In the fourth and final physical confrontation, the woman, furious at discovering her

husband once again, is pushed into the harbor, where she slowly drowns before hundreds of indifferent onlookers.

The obvious implementation of the double standard, the punishment of the woman who demands respect or public visibility, and her removal from strategic positions "behind the scenes" embody the demands of the old feminine ideal. In the film the suffrage parade is just wholesome entertainment, its political significance diluted in the harmlessness of Sunday leisure; the woman in society, who symbolically participates in the crowd, is only acceptable as a hyper-feminine caricature. Visually sanitized by the obvious maleness of Chaplin's body, violence against women is predicated as the instrument of choice for husbands and policemen to control wayward women. Compressed into the six minutes of the film, the actor's circus-like stunts trivialize the blows as slapstick comedy and his muscular prowess attenuates the viewer's sensibility. As Scott Martin points out, "images of male violence against women in early temperance literature reappeared, in altered form, in many aspects of American popular entertainment."[34] Chaplin's impersonation can be read as one of these reemergences, but it also foreshadows the real violence to come in the many episodes that characterized the suffrage campaign from the Washington parade of 1913 to the picketing of the White House in 1917.

The 1913 film *Pickpocket* has a more subtle narrative: A portly upper-class husband, annoyed that his suffragist wife is neglecting her housewifely duties, decides to exploit her typically female curiosity and love for the theater to teach her a lesson. Letting the woman find—and take—a theater ticket from his desk, the husband prepares an ambush at the theater, arranging for his wife's arrest for attempting to use a stolen ticket. After the show he appears *deus ex machina* at the jail to bail her out only after she agrees to sign her resignation from the suffrage club. Flora Fitch, a tall and angular actress, is particularly effective in the part of the hysteric: as soon as she is incarcerated, her physical appearance mutates to that of the stereotypical lunatic with crossed eyes, disheveled hair, and nervous fits. In addition, the film juxtaposes the power of male fraternity against the total isolation of the suffragist: the husband bribes a policeman to take his wife into custody and enjoys the arrest scene

with a friend before moving on to a burlesque show, while the wife, separated from her activist cohort, is sneered at by the film's respectable women. The blackmail arrayed against personal freedom and civil rights is dramatically similar to the measures that President Wilson adopted against the female picketers during World War I, only more successful in its outcome. The cinematic reestablishment of the domestic world order is built on female humiliation: through imprisonment and the re-imposition of physical and economic dependence, the wife's involvement in the suffrage cause is quickly relinquished. Whereas most anti-suffrage rhetoric linked women's unsuitability to meddling in the compromised world of politics to their ostensible moral superiority, *Pickpocket* clearly cast suffragists as morally weak and easily corruptible, rather than virtuous.

THE DISRUPTIVE PERFORMATIVE

"Sixty-four years of begging and now women can vote in nine states!" So retorts a disgruntled red-haired girl to the brunette sitting with her at a café. Her friend has just mentioned NAWSA's state-by-state suffrage campaign, and the dismal tally of 1912 prompts the outburst. A few minutes into the 2004 film *Iron Jawed Angels*, the spectator has already been introduced to the major players who, in the early 1910s, pulled the suffrage movement in different directions.[35] The historical redhead was Lucy Burns, the high-spirited companion to the founder of the National Woman's Party Alice Paul, her dark-haired associate. Whether they called it "begging" or not, the two young activists soon to lead NAWSA's Congressional Committee to push for a federal amendment were certainly impatient with the demure tactics deployed by the movement's upper echelons. Alice Paul was then twenty-seven years old and unmarried, with a doctorate from the University of Pennsylvania and a British criminal record: her Quaker upbringing was probably not sufficient to convince NAWSA president Dr. Anna Shaw that she would be malleable enough a candidate for an institutional role within the movement. It took the intercession of both Harriot Blatch and Jane Addams to persuade Shaw that Paul would not become a source of embarrassment. Within a couple of years, however, it became clear that

the fearless young leader deeply believed in the stigmatization of institutional powers as the only effective plan of action. This strategy was anathema to the NAWSA, which soon expunged the Committee. Free from institutional obligations, Paul absorbed the members and the priceless list of supporters of Blatch's WPU into her group in order to form, in 1917, the world's first women's political party.

The founding of the National Woman's Party (NWP) was in itself an act of political waywardness. As Carrol DuBois has observed, partisan politics was male to the core, while non-partisanship defined female political etiquette.[36] In this perspective, the NWP challenged the assumptions that monitored boundaries between masculinity and femininity in politics, providing a further, more institutionally innervated version of the "utopian performative" seen in suffrage movies. Far from aping male political styles, the Woman's Party distinguished itself with a series of peculiarities. Yet, with a one-plank platform (the vote for women), no presidential candidate, and the single strategy to "punish the party in power," it also revealed the shortcomings of an organization geared to the disruption of the status quo but unprepared for the creation of political alternatives. The NWP also marked a shift in the performative politics of the suffrage campaign by throwing the classed bodies of the suffragists into a tough battle where the activists risked both their status and their personal safety. As historical research of the last decade suggests, properly understanding the suffrage movement also means paying more attention to the NWP[37] and to its tactics of nonviolent resistance,[38] which, albeit extreme, always eschewed destructive assault. Rather than embracing circumspection, the adherence to an ostentatiously legal—if daring—behavior expressed an eminently American confidence in the spirit of the Progressive Era.[39] NWP leaders believed in the possibilities of democratic reform more deeply than, say, their British counterparts. As an intertitle in *Eighty Million* exhorted, American suffragists should "Fight for Right." This incitement posited the battle for enfranchisement as a battle for justice that could by no means be supralegal.

Upholding this belief in an inherently just state, Paul and her group dispensed with the option of returning the violence they suffered from

the institutions as of 1917, and rather wielded the wounded and humiliated bodies of the protesters as a weapon of visual rhetoric. NWP members let their elite appearances be disfigured by prison clothing, beatings, and fasting to fight the deficiencies of an ill-administered temporal power. For this reason they targeted the president of the United States in the autocratic persona of Woodrow Wilson, while leaving his institutional role unquestioned. Paul had the first hint of the disruptive potential of endured violence in America when she organized a grandiose march of 5,000 suffragists at the Capitol in 1913, strategically scheduling the parade the day before Wilson's inauguration and nearly upstaging the president's ceremonial speech. Women marched solemnly in a choreography that culminated with suffrage beauty and feminist lawyer Inez Milholland impersonating Joan of Arc.[40] But if a pageant, however spectacular, was nothing new, the violence visited upon the marchers by the anti-suffrage mob was unprecedented. The press's depiction of the incidents earned great sympathy to the cause: not only did the newspapers go wild over Milholland fighting back the attackers from her white horse, they also denounced the D.C. police for their indifference. Paul realized that, with a well-orchestrated strategy, the public could finally be presented with female political presence that was gender appropriate while still boldly indicting public authority.

From then on, the NWP campaigned exclusively against Wilson. The women of the western states were persuaded to vote *en bloc* against the Democrats both in the congressional elections of 1914 and in the presidential race of 1916. However indecisive, these interventions were considered key in placing women's suffrage on the national agenda,[41] and the NWP felt encouraged to upgrade their plan for a national boycott as the prospect of the United States' entering World War I was looming.[42] Starting in January 1917, the recently reelected Wilson was presented with a continuous delegation of "silent sentinels" who marched daily in front of the White House, carrying banners with suffragist slogans and questions for the president. Women from all over the country took turns on the picket line and the dramatic shift in the activists' performance changed the ranks of their constituency, attracting many younger, self-supporting women to the protest.[43] Contrary to the

general orientation of the national suffrage organization, the pickets continued also after the United States entered World War I in April 1917, a perseverance that attracted accusations of anti-patriotism. In June, the tolerance for the five-month-long siege suddenly evaporated: the picketers were assaulted, arrested, and hauled away to the night court in police patrol wagons.[44] Repeated several times, the treatment turned the suffragists into what historian Eleanor Flexner called "the earliest victims of the abrogation of civil liberties in wartime."[45] Because demonstrating was within the rights of any citizen, the protesters were officially arrested for "obstructing traffic" and, upon their refusal to pay fines whose payment would be tantamount to admitting guilt, women were sentenced for increasingly long periods of time to the dreaded Workhouse for Women at Occoquan in rural Virginia.

JAILED FOR FREEDOM, JAIL AS SPECTACLE

When women's history became a legitimate academic pursuit in the 1970s and 1980s, the scholarship on suffrage began to consider the militant phase of the suffrage campaign and, in recent years, a few articles have appeared on the National Woman's Party and their appropriation of the prison experience as a token of political identity.[46] Yet this correlation is by no means new. The first comprehensive account of the suffragists' incarceration between 1917 and 1919 appeared immediately after the passage of the suffrage amendment. It took a New York publisher with a taste for modernity to publish *Jailed for Freedom*, the memoir penned by NWP member Doris Stevens.[47] Arrested twice on the picket line, Stevens chronicled both prison violence and radical militancy with a thoroughness that probably appalled the general reader of 1920. Clearly conceived as propaganda as much as documentation, *Jailed for Freedom* emphasized how the unjustified incarceration, which involved altogether 168 American women, was not only endured heroically, but embraced to the point that the shameful markings of prison became honored badges of suffrage. Prison garb and brooches in the form of prison bars became the uniforms and war crosses of the soldiers for suffrage in a performative process of resignification that

exposed the arbitrariness of many law enforcement practices directed at women.

To be sure, the infamous administration of Occoquan House devised for the suffragists "cruel and unusual punishments"[48] that, in an attempt to break the women's determination, made systematic use of shame as a punishment for their hubris. One favorite method of forcing the prisoners to internalize the impudence of their crime was to make them one with the impudents, namely the prostitutes and the vagrants —mostly African American—who crowded the place. The uniform that suffragists were forced to wear, for example, was a "bulky mother-hubbard wrapper" (108). The Mother Hubbard gown, historian Sharon Wood reports, was originally a dressing gown intended for home wear, but by the end of the nineteenth century it had become the costume of prostitutes to the point that in some cities, women appearing in it in public could be arrested.[49] Forcing women attuned to upper-class privileges to "incorporate" markers of sexual transgression and waywardness was in tune with the message of some anti-suffrage films: since these women did not want to behave like (white) ladies, they lost every right to be treated as such. The suffragists' class and racial bias shows candidly through Stevens's writing, confirming the effectiveness of the administration's strategy. *Jailed for Freedom* vividly pictures the suffragists' revulsion not only at the forced nakedness, the "bucket system" of sanitation, and the coarse clothes, but also at the fact that they wore the black convicts' uniforms and slept side by side with "negro prostitutes" (109).[50] However, if during the longer detentions this discomfort gradually allowed solidarity to emerge, the vexation caused by the constant trespassing of the suffragists' bodily boundaries veered toward torture, including the exposure to syphilis, unnecessary inspections by male doctors, and physical attacks.

As Stevens detailed and numerous others confirmed, the most traumatic among the abuses suffered was the force-feeding that followed all of the suffragists' hunger strikes.[51] In British propaganda, force-feeding openly marked the suffragists' experience.[52] U.K. activists denounced it in rather graphic posters that called for a ban of the practice; in response, their opponents ridiculed the procedure on

humorous cards as a harmless device to silence some nagging harpies. In America, however, the conversation on the topic was covert, when not completely silenced.[53] Unlike in Great Britain, the suffragists were the first group in the history of the country to ever organize a collective and sustained hunger strike to claim the status of political prisoners. Given the highly gendered perspective that this form of protest assumed, force-feeding on the part of a purportedly benign male authority symbolically expressed the contradictions of a society that claimed to be protecting women while in fact confining them to a narrow functional role. The legitimacy of force-feeding as an act of medical care is still being debated today in reference to the frequent strikes in some American incarceration facilities, and, most famously, at Guantánamo Bay.[54] Contemporary public intellectuals have produced accounts on Guantánamo that read as appropriate commentaries to the suffragists' experience. Then as now, the wartime "state of exception" allowed the extraordinary procedures that led to the incarcerations;[55] then as now, the "detainees," stripped of the rights that protected other citizens and other prisoners, were reduced "to the status of unprotected *bios*."[56] These resonances seem to confirm Caleb Smith's claim that mortifying subjectivity "is not the 'exception' but the very premise of the American prison;"[57] on this light the necessity of preserving "bare life"[58] in the absence of a full civic life lies, then as now, at the core of the establishment's justification of force-feeding. In the suffragists' case, however, the "protection" of the bodily life through a practice that deliberately suffocated the full civic life that these women demanded was grafted onto the long-standing tradition of administering abusive and forceful "care" to a purportedly irrational, unrepentant woman. In keeping with the age-old custom of labeling deviant women as lunatics, the mental hospital was the elective site for disciplining female waywardness as well as for punishing dissent.[59] Furthermore, in a system where the law still considered daughters and wives to be property of the paterfamilias, forcing food on a fasting woman became a form of property protection through which the father/state preserved men's rights. In this perspective, it is eerily significant that the first known force-feeding in the American penal system befell Margaret

Sanger's sister, Ethel Byrne, who had been incarcerated for handing out birth control information in 1917.

Later the same year, Alice Paul consigned herself to this torture for the longest time, confident that she could turn the practice against itself. Given a stunning seven-month sentence, Paul started her hunger strike immediately and, despite a clean bill of mental health issued by the prison doctor, she was confined to the psychiatric ward of Occoquan House where the ordeal proceeded twice daily for weeks. The initial public response to Paul's force-feeding was probably not as dramatic as expected and, when the newspapers published a leaked note about the abuse, not even all suffragists were moved to action. On the contrary, Lucy Burns's letter to NWP members, urging them to write to Congress in protest, even received a reply from a party fellow announcing "I will not. Do not picket and you will not be force-fed."[60] Since respectability had always been a sensitive topic in the movement, this type of violence, often described in terms that made it sound like "nutritional rape"—with strong men holding down a woman and shoveling hard tubes into her internal organs—might have elicited scorn for the victim, rather than solidarity. In tune with Ruth Leys's reading of the role of shame in the logic of torture,[61] the feeling provoked by the sexually violent image of such force-feeding potentially extended to the whole movement; officially criticizing this would have increased the collective exposure to disgrace that the punishment entailed. These complicated public reactions revealed both widespread fears and a limited education in tactics of passive resistance to the point that Stevens, noting that "little is known in this country about the weapon of the hunger strike" (185) devoted an entire chapter of *Jailed for Freedom* to elucidating its historical genealogy and political significance. With this in mind, it is puzzling to observe that the 1995 edition of the memoir, an abridged version directed at the wider general public, has dispensed with that chapter completely.[62]

Whereas the publicization of force-feeding was never pursued on a visual level, the reconfiguration of prison garb assumed a key role in the rest of the suffrage campaign. Katherine Feo Kelly has analyzed the rhetoric of prison dress both in *Jailed for Freedom* and in the portraits in

prison clothes that the suffragists circulated in the NWP journal *The Suffragist*. In reading Alice Paul's request for political prisoner status as the moment in which the party rhetoric of jail experience assumed enabling connotations, Kelly suggests that this newly found agency inspired the protesters to use the marks of criminality for propaganda. While I second the interpretation that wearing prison uniforms in formal and public occasions made these items into "costumes for the public performance of suffrage rights"[63] I would like to argue that the elite, white bodies of the suffragists also rehabilitated the stigma attached to imprisonment for a whole class of marginal women.

In *Jailed for Freedom* it becomes apparent that the regular inmates at Occoquan are given sentences out of scale with their desperately petty misdemeanors. Overcoming, at least temporarily, class and racial barriers, imprisoned suffragists took an interest in the unfortunate women's stories and "charming companionship grew in prison" (152). Reprinting a comment from *The Nation*, *The Suffragist* openly invested the re-elaboration of the jail experience with a mission that went beyond the NWP's specific political goal and rediscovered the humanism at the basis of some genuine Progressive concerns: "The ordinary prisoner is inarticulate, unable to obtain a hearing even if he does succeed in expressing himself . . . men and women who go to prison for the sake of principle are likely to be articulate . . . and, being heard, to be believed."[64] A couple of months after this article was reprinted, the members of the NWP who had been incarcerated left on the "Prison Special," a cross-country speaking tour that would see them speaking from various podiums wearing a suffrage sash on top of replica prison clothes.[65] In this case, not only did the suffragists wear Mother Hubbard gowns in public and in groups, they also endeavored to be articulate on behalf of those more unfortunate women made voiceless in prison cells. Had the railway authorities not refused to display the prison insignia on the outside of the train car as the suffragists had intended, a spectacle such as the Prison Special would have symbolized even more cogently the inherent reprimand that society prepared for those women who took their right to mobility—physical, political, social—too seriously. Welcoming the stigma and the punishment as a sign of

their own value, suffragists on the Prison Special spread the wearable symbols of their experience, awarding for example the sixteen women who had been recently jailed in Boston with the suffrage "war cross:" the prison pin. The jewel was inspired by the Halloway Brooch designed by Sylvia Pankhurst and was a prison door replica with a heart-shaped lock. With this exquisitely feminine accessory, the body of the female criminal became the body of the valiant soldier in the suffrage war, which was about to be won.

With the end of the real war, the truce between the NWP and the NAWSA also arrived. When the House of Representatives finally passed the Anthony Amendment in 1918, the NASWA continued to lobby the Senate, which passed it in 1919.[66] The combination of radical civil disobedience and conventional political lobbying finally achieved a breakthrough. NAWSA's president Catt saw this victory as a celebration of her diplomatic strategy, which eventually came to be known as "the winning plan."[67] However, had the NWP not kept the cause of suffrage in the view of the president and the nation during and after World War I, and had no one pushed the cause with the same spectacular determination, putting their bodies into the struggle, it is very doubtful that the all-male legislatures would have granted women their civil rights.

WOMEN AT WORK: A CLASH OF REPRESENTATION

When in 1834 the Lowell Mill girl Harriet Hanson Robinson went on strike she felt proud and strangely powerful. It was the first mass strike in the U.S. textile industry and she could not help, in retrospect, describing her emotional stirring as a prefiguration of the day in which her "beloved State" would hopefully give its "women citizens the right of suffrage."[68] For most of the century to come, labor activists and suffragists certainly shared Harriet's mixture of pride and hopeful enablement, most probably in connection with a specific form of protest they employed with vigor: walking. Walking out into the streets and public spaces, parading female bodies as a living indictment of an unequal system was a symbolic performance that both groups embraced as a political act. However, while the suffragists' performance of dissent

evolved into the “invention” of the female citizen as a revolutionary patriot and a war hero, contemporary labor activists were wary of appealing to these topoi of American democracy.[69] Many workers could not claim ties to a revolutionary past since they had been American only for a few years and were still struggling to be accepted into American society. The “Uprising of the 20,000” in 1909 was the largest strike by women workers the United States had ever seen.[70] For thirteen weeks, more than 20,000 employees in the shirtwaist industry[71] —75 percent of which were young women, mostly of immigrant origin—left the sewing machines to protest their insufficient wages and unbearable working conditions. Much of their protest for workers’ rights was also a performance of Americanness that questioned and reshaped issues of immigration, labor, and notions of female respectability. For this reason, whereas the suffrage movement could experiment creatively by making the elite suffrage body the medium of provocative symbolism, female strikers instead clothed their ethnic bodies in unthreatening all-American garments.

The prominence of the visual politics of dress did not go unnoticed, to the point that, in its initial weeks, the *New York Times* coverage of the strike was not indexed under labor, but under fashion.[72] Sensing that a proper public interpretation would be crucial to the cause, the traditionally male-oriented Socialist Party resorted to one of its female icons, and sent Theresa Serber Malkiel to “oversee” the general strike. In 1909, Malkiel had long abandoned front-line striking activities, but could flaunt a militant past and an extremely active political present. In 1891, shortly after her arrival in the United States, she had become a teenage agitator in the women’s sectors of the Jewish labor movement and then proceeded to climb through the hierarchy of the labor organizations.[73] Although the party leadership and their elective unions set standards for socialist womanhood that verged on crass sexual discrimination and misrepresented the interests of wage-earning women, Malkiel was always optimistic about the possibility of integrating socialist with feminist ideals. In the early twentieth century, she operated both in the Socialist Party’s division for the recognition of female issues and in the more nurturing Women’s Trade Union League (WTUL), an organization in

which elite women worked with, rather than for, working women and that counted prominent members such as Jane Addams and Eleanor Roosevelt.

While monitoring the “Uprising of the 20,000,” Malkiel described the strikers to the press, adhering to the conventional image of the deserving poor. This token of party rhetoric clashed with some of the claims presented by the new generation of labor organizers, most notably Clara Lemlich, who wrote the only article by a striker to appear in the popular press.[74] Born in Russia to Ukrainian parents, Lemlich came to the United States in 1903 fleeing the pogroms that ravaged her native region. Aged seventeen, she immediately began to work in the shirtwaist industry while continuing an intellectual and political education that rendered her a seasoned radical in less than a decade. In November 1909, her fiery speech in Yiddish at the Cooper Union allegedly transformed a haphazard walkout into a general strike.[75] According to the historian Nan Enstad, Lemlich conveyed the conditions of working women by discussing their sense of fashion using a language of political entitlement that the unions were reluctant to hear. In Lemlich’s words, the strike represented an opportunity for immigrant girls to express their newly acquired Americanness through the appropriation of “ladyhood,” as it had developed in workplace culture. Her remarks resonated with the concerns of working women, who challenged the way in which industrial labor devalued human potential and who were at the same time accessing a style of femininity from which they had thus far been excluded. Indeed, many workers invested a good amount of their pay into styling themselves as elegant flâneuses of the city streets. In the act of walking they distinguished themselves from the shop floor, and their walking out during the strikes magnified this quotidian act of self-determination. Working girls pursued their uplifting fantasies with attempts at class passing often inspired by entertainment culture: so intense was their identification with movie stars that they felt entitled to the respectability they saw granted to middle-class ladies on the screen. However, because this respectability was not a patrimony bequeathed to them through descent, but an ephemeral capital acquired through pitiable means, it was easily vulnerable—both

politically and materially. As sentient political subjects, in fact, the strikers were largely neglected, when not astutely delegitimized.[76] The sneering *New York Times*, for example, raised the level of its skepticism by construing the relationship between the textile workers and the union according to the melodramatic paradigms of the popular novels of the day. Paradoxically, while striking girls also felt validated in their public action through the emulation of certain fictional role models, the press used that field of reference to cast them as frivolous damsels in distress, attracted to the union exclusively in its capacity of mysterious and powerful protector.[77] To counter the journalistic misuse of the workers' good looks and good spirits, Malkiel reassured the readers of the labor-friendly *New York Call*, explaining that "It is not for riches or luxuries" that women struck, but for "a living wage, a little more freedom and the right to co-operate with each other for their common defense."[78] Her rhetoric interestingly eschewed overt references to labor politics and adopted an imagery that would not disconcert a middle-class audience. Since Malkiel was an experienced journalist with a number of radical pamphlets to her name, her cautious appropriation of the mainstream narrative register is to be read as intentional, not as servile. Rather, this strategy assumes new meaning if considered within Malkiel's aim of bending a conservative melodramatic framework to the goals of the labor cause. Indeed, a couple of months after the strike, the *New York Call* published a series of pieces titled "From the Diary of a Striking Waist Maker."[79] The excerpts, published a few months later in book form as *The Diary of a Shirtwaist Striker*,[80] presented the striker as an American heroine, initially beginning her labor adventure steeped in the juvenile thrill so manipulated by the press, but then overcoming a series of melodramatic reversals to become a fully developed role model. It has been noted that remarks such as Malkiel's, urging women to forego ornate fashions for more sober attire, misrecognized the workers' cultural practices.[81] However, if in the debate over the appropriate image for the female striker Lemlich and Malkiel appear to be on opposing sides, a closer look and a wider conception of the notion of performance allow for a change of perspective. A scene from Malkiel's *Diary of a Shirtwaist Striker*, in which the significance of clothing is

conveyed with unexpected vividness illustrates this point. While fleeing her vengeful boss, the daredevil Rebecca enters a kitchen and, simply by donning a kitchen apron, renders herself unrecognizable to her pursuers. The same night, a "millionaire lady" comes to the girl's rescue and helps her flee unharmed with another disguise: clad in a luxurious gown, Rebecca is once again unsuspected (135). Signifying the indeterminate position of the worker, no longer a housemaid but not yet a lady, these contrasting scenes of social passing highlight the optimistic projection of the working girls' identity onto a superior class, a vision of beauty and self-assurance that triggers admiration and elicits a desire for fine clothes:

> I tell you what, clothes do make a difference. Rebecca looked as nice as the best of them when she was togged out in one of those ladies' clothes. . . . I wish so much that every one of us girls could dress that nice, and I don't know as anybody could blame us for wanting pretty things—we're still young and would like to appear at our best advantage. (135)

This passage represents the extent to which Malkiel understood Lemlich's assertions of the importance of style to the young female workers, although she did not make these symbolic attributes the focus of her fiction. Nonetheless her *Diary of a Shirtwaist Striker* harbors a deeper "carnivalesque" conception of the walkout by picturing it as a collective performance whose transformative energy derives precisely from its being a public spectacle of the "suspension of all hierarchical precedence."[82] In Malkiel's rendition, this energy is not channeled through and toward self-fashioning but instead through and toward a radical withdrawal from oppressive patriarchal hierarchies incarnated in the familial structure and replicated in the organization of labor.

THERESA MALKIEL'S PERFORMANCE OF AMERICANNESS

"Mum don't know that I ain't working!" (82). With the confident grammatical nonchalance of the "authentic" native speaker, the narrating I of the *Diary of a Shirtwaist Striker*, American-born Mary, encapsulates

the thrill, the generational struggle, and the political determination that underpinned the "Uprising of the 20,000" in New York.[83] In this short *Bildungsroman*, Mary's separation from her family and the awakening of her social consciousness go hand in hand, and in combination they lead her to oppose the conjunction of patriarchal domination and inequality labor, that characterized the textile sector.

In the garment industry, working females were cast in a role that replicated their status as daughters within the patriarchal family: they were denied the adult status of women categorized with the inferior "girl."[84] The denial of adulthood to working women produced real socio-economic advantages for men: quite obviously, it allowed the employers of the "girls" to cut wage costs; but it was also a symbolic defense of breadwinning masculinity. Moreover, both manufacturers and overseers often perpetrated systematic sexual harassment, while euphemizing it as "fatherly affection." In revolt against such infantilizing mechanisms of gendered exploitation, the workers who engaged in the strikes of 1909 withdrew allegiance both from their biological fathers, when they decided that they would stop turning over all their wages to the families and from their bosses, when they declared that they would rather be orphans than submit to a regime of systematic injustice styling itself as protective and fatherly.[85]

Accordingly, shortly after walking out of the shirtwaist shop, the *Diary's* protagonist also walks out of her family home following a fight with her father, never to return. In the utter simplicity of Malkiel's prose, in the first line of the book, Mary assumes the hefty responsibility of overturning enduring mechanisms of oppression with a light a burst of laughter—a laughter similar in function to the carnival laughter of early Renaissance culture as described by Bakhtin, which harbored the possibility of a "complete withdrawal from the present order:"[86] "Ha, ha, ha! That's a Joke. By Jove, it is. I'm a striker." This opening line is revelatory: the three blasts of laughter—like the three thumps that announce the beginning of the play in classical theater—mark the beginning of the liminal period. They proclaim Mary's break with the hyper-regulated time of production and her entry into the time of the strike, which, at least in its initial phase, is perceived as an interval of

joyous anarchy. As in the Bakhtinian rendition of “carnival,” the strike is a chronotope in which laughter dispels fear—the fear of rule breaking, of unmarriageability, of physical retaliation, of detention, even the fear of death. Once dispelled by laughter, these fears can be forgotten in the empowering atmosphere of communal action. Mary’s gradual education in the ideology of the strike is Malkiel’s didactic strategy for guiding her readers to political consciousness. Research has demonstrated that Malkiel probably knew, as an insider, that the walkout had been carefully prepared for months; nonetheless her *Diary* presents the strike as a spontaneous eruption of collective rebellion, replicating the sense of surprise—present in contemporary accounts in the press—that the massive action must have aroused in the observing public as well as in many of its participants.[87] However, in contrast to the public perception, Malkiel articulates how the fervor of inception is inevitably subject to the transience of all performances. Just as the carnival is encapsulated in a closed temporal unit, in the same way the strike is after all a “moment” of rupture and precariousness; whose uncertain of its outcome creates the vulnerability that characterizes the striker.[88] Visibility is invaluable merchandise for which the strikers pay with blood and terror. Still, if there is to be a change that goes beyond a negotiation within the existing rules of the game this precious stage of visibility must not merely concern itself with demanding better working conditions, but also with creating an alternative feminine ethos.

The deliberate performance of an American voice on the part of Russian-born Malkiel illuminates this agenda. Beyond the practical strategies of avoiding anti-Semitism in the reception of the work and of reaching out to a wider audience, the choice of a protagonist who will be recognized as fully American allowed Malkiel to present a radical model of femininity as something that was already in its rightful place simply by presenting it as rooted in the national birthright. In the interstices of the narrative conventions, Mary’s American “second life” defines the contours of the “utopian performative” where the still unrealized utopia is a pluralistic and egalitarian America. Malkiel’s “performance of Americanness” has various levels of complexity ranging from ventriloquism to impersonation to moments of metatheatrical reflection.

Yet Mary's development into emotional and political maturity is conveyed through the more radical possibilities of impersonation.

In this mode, Malkiel's performance of Americanness becomes more deeply subversive and capable of propounding a new, non-bourgeois, non-Victorian feminine respectability and offering a strong take on the continuing debates over a woman's proper place. Often in the course of her vicissitudes Mary is reproached for being in the wrong place, for dismissing the ideal of feminine submissive respectability, for being, in other words, wayward (163). Wishing to make herself "notorious" rather than invisible, Mary develops her own role by *acting out*, in several senses of the phrase: by the radical act of pacing the seediest streets of her city; and by identifying with the professional performers she encounters in her wanderings. Overtly defying the conventional wisdom that associated actresses and performers with intrinsic immorality, Mary registers her internal change, after having been seen on the "well lit stage" of a Bowery theater, as a change in her own ability to see: "I can't look upon things with the same eyes I used to, I don't seem to distinguish any longer what's respectable and what ain't" (162). The careful phrasing hardly encompasses the ample project that the narrator undertakes with a new clarity of judgment. In ransoming the throngs of disobedient girls who have been socially ostracized because of their incorrigibility, Mary transforms a paralyzing stigma into a wealth of possibilities: the paternal home that she left is quickly replaced with a sisterhood of strikers, a community of peers in which feminine morality and heterosexual relations are regulated according to egalitarian principles. For these new American girls, Malkiel even portrays an amorous and economic etiquette. Quite openly, Mary admits to enjoying physical intimacy with her boyfriend despite maintaining a certain verbal privacy, and she commits the ultimate forbidden act, which even charity girls avoid, of taking cash from Jim—a consequence of their having already agreed to an egalitarian companionate marriage. In her critique of traditional marriage, Malkiel incorporates an open excoriation of conventional motherhood. Both American and immigrant mothers are conflated in their "freakishness" (122) and share a "monstrous" responsibility vis-à-vis, for example, the prostitutional destiny of many working class girls. Represented as thoughtless propagators of

patriarchal dictums, both classes of mothers are thus equally discounted as viable role models, to the point that the author insists on the sheer impossibility of genuine motherhood within a system pervaded by capitalist exploitation.

In tune with its melodramatic genre, the story ends on an optimistic, utopian note: after having followed the protagonists through all the innumerable stages of the urban theater, the patient fiancé, now a fervid labor rights supporter, marries Mary on the same day that the manufacturer settles for a union agreement. In contrast to Malkiel's *Diary*, the labor-themed melodramas of the standard dime novels suggested that marriage to a manufacturer could be the great leveler of class differences and that minor changes within the existing arrangements would suffice to redress an exacerbated situation.[89] Against the backdrop of such simplified narrative solutions, Malkiel's alternative melodrama emerges in its cultural significance. The two parallel subversions invoked during the strike—the rejection of the power relationships of the factory and of the patriarchal family model—reach a common apex in the image of the two newlyweds who, instead of moving into a house of their own, move in with the family of workers that had previously sheltered Mary. Although our modern sensibility is likely to find the ending excessively "staged," its utopianism posits a transaction between actors and spectators, open to the capacity of a performance—the strike, but also Americanness—to exceed a merely theatrical dimension and become effective in society.

BASHING AND PRAISING THE WORKING GIRL

Beyond lamenting being treated like criminals, the thousands of strikers who headed to Mayor McClellan's office in December 1909 proudly asserted their status as cognizant, law-abiding citizens. The strikers took pride in never overstepping legal boundaries while exerting "moral suasion" toward scabs and uninformed workers. Yet as with the picketing suffragists almost a decade later, their exhibition of lawful civic passion did not protect them from abusive male retaliation, mob violence, and illegal imprisonment. In the chapters that Malkiel devotes to Mary's incarceration, there are "darkrooms" for solitary confinement, rat-ridden

floors, vermin-infested food, savage beatings, and forced work that would recur later, almost verbatim, in the suffragists' testimonies. Anticipating the NWP's strategy, labor activists tried to obtain some public purchase from the injustice of incarceration. For example, Miss Dreier, president of the Woman Trade Union's League, declared that she was actually almost "glad . . . of the incident which resulted in her arrest" because it gave her "the chance to tell the facts."[90] In some instances, the strikers tried to spectacularize their status as former convicts, as on the occasion of the last large meeting before the end of the strike, when twenty women who had been sent to the Blackwell's Island workhouse sat on the platform at Carnegie Hall. Behind them 350 women wore white sashes with the inscription "arrested," while before the audience a ten-year-old girl gave a heartrending testimony of the police brutality.[91] It is no surprise that these episodes, almost templates for some moments of the later suffrage battle, were given visibility precisely because they corresponded to the phase in which suffrage activists and their wealthy liberal allies openly supported and financed the strikers. Shortly thereafter, however, the incarcerated and brutalized body of the strikers proved to be not only the focus but also the limit of the suffragist-striker alliance and the weeks that followed showed its insufficiency as a site of political negotiation. As with the suffragists, during incarceration the safety and the respectability of the imprisoned women strikers were threatened through their confinement with professional prostitutes. Whereas in the case of the suffragists, their status limited attempts to discredit their moral standing in order to undermine their political claims, the strikers "faced tactics that capitalized on the historic association of unescorted women in public space with . . . public disorder."[92] During the conflicts at the Triangle and Leiserson shops that preceded the general strikes, manufacturers knew that by hiring prostitutes to infiltrate the pickets, they would damage the credibility of the demonstrators. Although this tactic did not persist into the general strike, it was observed in the press that the police addressed the strikers as "streetwalkers" at a time when the term was already synonymous with "prostitute."[93] The inextricable connection in the popular mind between the female worker and the

prostitute was already in place long before the strikes commenced. Sharon Wood describes it as rooted in the mentality of the Gilded Age and argues that, in embracing the free-labor promise of emancipation, women also "took up the tools of . . . political life to assert the respectability of paid employment."[94] According to some historians, this association derived more precisely from a certain connection between the sweatshop and a suspicious morality, which had gained sway at the beginning of the Progressive Era. This conflation prompted a fear for male interests that emerged when female labor became a precious commodity.[95] Furthermore, although many forms of shop floor sexuality were profitable and promising for a serene marital future, sexual harassment remained a widespread practice that "transformed workplace heterosexuality in a sphere of power that, in some cases, blurred class contestations," since bosses and co-workers alike, often in tacit alliance, perpetrated it.[96] In a time when it took only fifty dollars to open a shop, a male worker could move up to the position of being a boss in the time of a season.[97] Economic mobility of this kind had the effect of eroding the divide separating a male employee from his employer; the aura of confidence and camaraderie ensuing from economic hope undermined the inclination to denounce abusive practices. Against the backdrop of such transversal male communities, sexual threats emerged as silent tools for reestablishing clear hierarchies along the lines of gender.[98]

The shadow that sexual abuse cast on female sweatshop workers' respectability worked as a powerful disciplinary device. Its regular implementation in the soft modalities of lewd comments selectively affected the most modest or religiously observant of the workers, causing them either to leave work or to suffer constant inner distress. In the *Diary*, Malkiel swiftly registers both the manufacturers' usage of sexual slanders to break the strikers' spirit (88) as well as the court cases in which young girls sought redress after having been "seduced" by their employers. Her tiptoeing references reveal the misogynous and sexualized environment that often crippled girls' ambitions to equality by causing them to internalize the condition of disrespect as inevitable, normal, and their own fault. In some graver occurrences—such as the

withdrawal of pay to girls who turned down a suspicious invitation by a superior—female workers experienced firsthand the superimposition of their labor value onto their potential for sexual servitude: in these cases, the wages for production output were only unlocked by the worker's surrendering as sexual property. Female Jewish and Italian garment workers cited harassment as a justification for organizing and for joining the unions despite the fact that union leaders were initially reluctant to include it as a legitimate claim. Nonetheless, since the WTUL felt compelled to distinguish factory workers from prostitutes in public opinion, the positive rhetoric of ladyhood was also understood as a demand for civility from disrespectful males.

Despite the crass opposition, the performance of superior respectability began to reshape the perception of working class women in the public eye, as they became aware of their rights as workers, duties as citizens, and value as women. Even in the paternalistic pro-capital movies of the early 1910s, directly responding to the season of strikes, female workers emerged as solid—if tame—paragons of femininity.[99] The Thanhouser film *The Girls Strike Leader*, released only six months after the strike, pictured Lou, the working-class protagonist, as defiant, virtuous, and attractive. The manufacturer's son, Hall, working undercover in the factory, falls immediately in love with her and does not waver when the girl leads a strike to protest a wage cut. Spellbound by her courage, Hal saves Lou from the malingering attention of the wicked foreman Conners and, after she agrees to marry him, he takes possession of the factory and restores the wages to a living standard. In spite of the lopsided depiction of the labor-capital relations and the blaming of the middleman typical of the time (the workers actually strike against Conners, not against the owner), the film cast the striker in a positive if mystified light. Her moral stamina was never doubted and one reviewer in *Moving Picture World* delighted in the fact that a young man leading a wasteful life abandoned his frivolous companions to marry a worker, "a true-hearted girl such as he had never seen before."[100] Not only does the striking girl make an excellent wife, she is also the moral guarantee that the successors of the robber barons will not squander the capital they inherit. The simplistic and desperately revisionist *The*

Crime of Carelessness, financed by the National Association of Manufacturers in response to the protest that followed the infamous Triangle Fire, equally celebrated the resilience of the working girl, and made her the linchpin of the nonetheless disingenuous plot.[101]

Yet in an age that saw the birth of the "Worker Film Movement,"[102] one of the strongest pleas for the moral dignity of the working (New) woman came from the theater. Whereas a largely unorganized, grassroots national campaign began turning out pro-labor films in which the audience could see a unified working class making the United States a better nation, Edward Sheldon wrote a "sociorealistic drama" for the stage about a woman intent on finding her place in the world.[103] *The High Road* was deemed a "theatrical mosaic" in that it covered twenty-five years in the life of Mary Page, revealing, as the *New York Times* remarked, "too much and too little" of the complex subject matters informing the play: the woman's question, the labor issue, political bribery, the role of the press, and the negotiation of a new morality for both men and women.[104] The mosaic, however, is held together by Mary's development, an evolution that encompasses her flight from the farm of her brutal father in pursuit of love and freedom, her lavish years as a kept woman, her decision to leave her rich lover and become a labor activist in the textile sector, and, finally, her maturity as the wife of a presidential candidate. In the second act, when Mary considers the emptiness of her affluent life as a mistress, she realizes that only work will change her status as a human commodity. Her life is "an offense to society," not so much because of her unwed status—as the synopsis of the 1915 film version of *The High Road* suggests—but because of her lack of purpose in a world teeming with social battles.[105] Factory work becomes a tool of emancipation, of political awakening, and of moral regeneration: a girl that most narratives of the time would have seen as the perfect candidate for a life of sexual slavery becomes instead the head of the Women's Labor Union and meets her future husband—then a governor—while presenting a bill for an eight-hour day. Because society is not ready for this type of New Woman, Mary's wayward past comes back to haunt her and hurt her husband's chances to run for the highest office but, quite unexpectedly, nothing is

lost. Mary owns up to her past, retains the love of her husband as well as her peace of mind, and even encounters the favor of the audience. In fact, although both on tour and on Broadway *The High Road* incited controversy, the play's message was generally well received.[106] In the final production, Sheldon cut many lines detailing the hardships endured by the picketing strikers, the mathematics of the capitalist exploitation of workers, and the discussion of child labor; nonetheless the body of the working woman remained the crucible in which the wayward, parasitic subject morphed into an active, dignified citizen. If, with Dolan, we believe that live performances "provide a place where people come together . . . to share experiences of meaning making . . . that can . . . capture fleeting intimations of a better world," then Sheldon extended that place from the city streets to the stages of many American theaters and engaged the spectator in a rehearsal for civic change that mirrored the spectacle taking place in society at large.

NEVER FORGIVE

Less than sixteen months had passed since the strikers' parade of December 1909 when Manhattan witnessed, once again, "an army of workers" march side by side with a delegation of suffragists. The rained poured down on the 120,000 marching women and the 300,000 onlookers but, even in gentler weather, no one would have called the assembly festive. The marchers were paying tribute to the 146 workers who had perished in the Triangle fire, whose unidentified bodies were in the funeral car at the front of the procession, escorted by a platoon of police and a dozen survivors. The press registered the uneasy presence of elite suffragists who were possibly trying to increase their political capital by joining the march, but whether they were a welcome presence remains uncertain. One walker who was coldly indifferent to their presence was Rose Schneiderman, who took no notice of her former friend Harriot Stanton Blatch following behind.[107] Schneiderman had cut all ties with Blatch and the suffrage leadership at the beginning of 1910, precisely because she held her responsible for thwarting the outcome of the strike. It was a common opinion, validated by opinions at the top of the New York suffrage movements, that the intrusion of

society women in the 1909 walkout—though providing visibility and financial support—had ultimately forced the workers to settle for too weak an agreement, the tragic consequences of which were being mourned that day. Malkiel, for one, had made no secret of her doubts, and already at the Carnegie Hall meeting at the apex of the strikes she had openly accused suffragist and WTUL's financial backer Ann Morgan—J. P. Morgan's daughter—of "pretended friendship" after the aristocrat and her internal ally, the conservative labor organizer Eva McDonald Valesh, called the Socialist Party a "disruptive element in the movement."[108]

Sensing the danger behind the lure of cross-class solidarity, Malkiel held the pragmatic belief that a universal suffrage championed exclusively by elite women would probably have little practical benefit for labor rights. This awareness possibly grew during the 1909 strikes but, in spite of her grave reservations and occasional outbursts, she still supported New York's suffrage organizations, both before and after 1910. The *Diary*'s sections dealing with suffrage reveal a cogent ambivalence that characterized most labor activists and resonated with the contradictory statements found in the press.[109] Thinly disguising authorial skepticism in the naiveté of the narrator, the *Diary* juxtaposes the parade to the mayor's office with the famous Hippodrome meeting organized by millionaire Alva Belmont the following day. While the march, clearly described as a labor event, fills Mary with a sense of enablement, the lavish Hippodrome meeting is experienced with a mixture of attraction and revulsion. Only the universalist force of the suffrage message distracts Mary from her uneasiness. Mirroring the wavering line of the suffrage-labor alliance, the *Diary* powerfully depicts the dreams and fears animating the workers who turned to the powerful wealthy for help but also remained fully aware of the class divide that would only deepen at the end of the winter.

During the strike arbitrations, Valesh, ventriloquizing Belmont and Morgan, urged the strikers to accept the terms proposed by large manufacturers. As the strikers refused, the suffragists' support waned, and the key demand for a union shop could not be achieved.[110] In the wake of this partial setback, anti-socialism grew among the suffragists,

and anti-belmontism grew among the workers.[111] The support of the suffragists had been based on their identification with those aspects of the workers' experience that represented, in retrospect, precognitions of their own experience. The oppressed female worker, subject to police and judicial harassment, was defended as an objective correlative under a common condition of denied citizenship. This solidarity, however, did not extend beyond the immediacy of that classed body, to the economic roots of its subjection, because those roots provided the wealth that supported most of the suffrage movement. The funeral parade was by no means a propagandistic event: political banners were censored and national colors were simply draped in mourning. Yet a circular urging the prosecution of the "guilty capitalists" was confiscated in 1,000 copies, and its angry message, reported in the *New York Times*, resonated ominously in the years to come: "Never Forgive the Enemies of your Class."[112]

The itineraries of the suffragists' and workers' battle ran in parallel for long stretches, sporadically showing moments of intersection. The tactics and strategies with which the two battles were waged shared a resemblance and rendered both suffragists and strikers pioneers in the feminist tradition that wielded the female body as the crucial weapon against patriarchal laws. At a general level, both groups of New Women rejected or questioned the assignment of domesticity as their only proper realm of reference and forged lifestyles that, although different and diverging, equally signaled the need for alternatives to the patriarchal family model. In the common act of "walking out," these two groups embodied different mechanisms of cultural awareness and of political understanding, but they also set out to exchange a meaningfully different currency for the achievement of recognition. The suffragists performed their dissent protected by their conspicuous respectability, the "letter of recommendation" earned by their Victorian grandmothers, a value imprinted upon them as the heritage accumulated by previous generations. Respectability was the patrimony that the suffragists—college graduates, middle-class ladies, and wealthy aristocrats—put on the table and risked in order eventually to win constitutional

recognition. By contrast, the strikers of 1909–1910, unsheltered by fatherly inheritance, material or spiritual, had nothing with which to protect themselves except for their hard-earned, newly purchased clothing. Nonetheless, even while weak in patrimony and vulnerable in status, the strikers' performance of new, alternative versions of ladyhood and Americanness produced a lasting impression that came to be viewed as an essential part of modern women's emancipation.

NOTES

1. "Girls Strikers Go to the City Hall," *New York Times*, December 4, 1909.
2. Martha H. Patterson, *Beyond the Gibson Girl: Reimagining the American New Woman, 1895–1915* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 4.
3. Ibid., 8.
4. Jean H. Baker, "Getting Right with Women Suffrage," *Journal of the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era* 5, no. January (2006): 8.
5. Mary Jo Buhle, *Women and American Socialism, 1870–1920* (Urbana, Chicago, and London: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 54.
6. Linda J. Lumsden, *Rampant Women: Suffragists and the Right of Assembly* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1997).
7. One notable exception is Ellen Carol Dubois, *Harriot Stanton Blatch and the Winning of Woman Suffrage* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).
8. Ibid., 92.
9. Maurice H. Krout, "Symbolism," in Haig Bosmanjian, ed., *Rhetoric of Nonverbal Communication* (Glenview: Scott Foresman, 1971).
10. Mildred Adams, "Rampant Women," in NSWA, ed., *Victory! How Women Won It: A Centennial Symposium, 1840–1940* (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1940), 43. For references to the editorial titled "An Unsexed Monster" see Lumsden, *Rampant Women*, xix; and Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States* (New York: Atheneum [1959] 1974), 165.
11. Susan E. Marshall, *Splintered Sisterhood: Gender and Class in the Campaign against Women Suffrage* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), 4–5.

12. Jean V. Matthews, *The Rise of the New Woman: The Women's Movement in America, 1875–1930* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2003), 136–37.
13. The official birth of the suffrage movement dates back to the Declaration of Sentiments drafted by Elizabeth Cady Stanton for the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848. In 1869 there was a split into the more distinctly feminist National Women Suffrage Association (NWSA) founded by Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, and the American Women Suffrage Association (AWSA), which Lucy Stone headquartered in Boston with the intent to foster the abolitionist tradition. In 1890, the two competing national suffrage associations consolidated into the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA).
14. Ellen Carol Dubois, "The Next Generation: Harriot Stanton Blatch and Grassroots Politics," in Jean H. Baker, ed., *Votes for Women: The Struggle for Suffrage Revisited* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 161.
15. Dorothy Schneider and Carl J. Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era, 1900–1920* (New York: Facts on File, 1993), 180.
16. Matthews, *The Rise of the New Woman*, 139.
17. Susan A. Glenn quoted in Maria Elena Buszek, *Pin-up Grrrls: Feminism, Sexuality, Popular Culture* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 130.
18. Robert Sklar, *Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies* (New York: Vintage, [1975] 1994), 4–5; and Kay Sloan, *The Loud Silents: Origins of the Social Problem Film* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 99.
19. See Kevin Brownlow, *Behind the Mask of Innocence: The Social Problem Films of the Silent Era* (New York: Knopf, 1990), 225–38; Sloan, *The Loud Silents*, 99–123; and Shelley Stamp, *Movie-Struck Girls: Women and Motion Picture Culture after the Nickelodeon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 154–94.
20. For the first mode see for example *A Day in the Life of a Suffragette* (Pathé, 1908); *A Suffragette in Spite of Himself* (Edison, 1912); *Les Femmes Deputés* (Lux, 1912); and *Milling the Militants: A Comic Absurdity* (Clarendon, 1913). Striking examples of a dystopian future shaped by role reversal are *The Suffragette's Dream* (Pathé, 1909) and *When Women Vote* (Lubin, 1907).

21. For example: *When Men Left Town* (Edison, 1914); and *Fire! Fire! Fire!* (Méliès, 1911).
22. *Was He a Suffragette* (Republic, 1912); *The Militant* (Imp, 1914), *How They Got the Vote* (Edison, 1913), and *Suffragette Minstrels* (Biograph, 1913). See Stamp and Sloan for synopsis of these movies.
23. By 1908 the British suffragettes were already inviting film companies to document their most important rallies, a novelty that was eagerly picked up by the press too. Sloan, *The Loud Silents*, 101.
24. *Suffrage and the Man* (Eclair, 1912).
25. For cinema of narrative integration see Tom Gunning, "Weaving a Narrative: Style and Economic Background in Griffith's Biograph Films," *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* 6, no. 1 (1981).
26. *Eighty Million Women Want—?* (Unique Film, 1913).
27. Stamp, *Movie-Struck Girls*, 184–93.
28. Jill Dolan, *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope in the Theatre* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 5–6.
29. Ibid., 8.
30. Dubois, *Harriot Stanton Blatch*, 91–93.
31. *Your Girl and Mine* (Selig, 1914).
32. Susan Faludi, "American Electra: Feminism's Ritual Matricide," *Harper's Magazine* 321, no. 1925 (2010): 36.
33. *Pickpocket* (Vitagraph, 1913); and *A Militant Suffragette / A Busy Day* (Keystone, 1914). The latter movie, in which Charles Chaplin played the wife, was the actor's first number *en travesti*.
34. Scott C. Martin, *Devil of the Domestic Sphere: Temperance, Gender and Middle Class Ideology, 1800–1860* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008), 14.
35. *Iron-Jawed Angels* (HBO, 2004). The film was directed by Katja von Garnier and starred Hilary Swank as Alice Paul and Frances O'Connor as Lucy Burns. The opening scene features an emblematic exchange between Harriot Stanton Blatch (Margot Martindale) and Carrie Chapman Catt (Anjelica Huston) about Alice Paul and her ambition to lobby Congress.
36. Dubois, *Harriot Stanton Blatch*, 125. Another interesting precedent mentioned by Dubois is the small group of suffrage activists that called themselves American Suffragettes. While working for suffrage, they also

"undertook a spirited defense of female sexuality which had been held to be the price for women of vigorous participation in public life" (101).
37. See Baker, "Getting Right with Women Suffrage"; and Katherine H. Adams and Michael L. Keene, *Alice Paul and the American Suffrage Campaign* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008). As to the now classic studies that first called attention to the role of the NWP see Christine A. Lunardini, *From Equal Suffrage to Equal Rights: Alice Paul and the National Woman's Party, 1910–1928* (New York: New York University Press, 1986); and Linda Ford, *Iron-Jawed Angels: The Suffrage Militancy and the National Woman's Party, 1912–1920* (New York: Lanham, 1991).
38. Linda Ford, "Alice Paul and the Politics on Nonviolent Protest," in Jean H. Baker, ed., *Votes for Women: The Struggle for Suffrage Revisited* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 175.
39. Ibid., 178.
40. Ann Marie Nicolosi, "'The Most Beautiful Suffragette': Inez Milholland and the Political Currency of Beauty," *The Journal of Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 6, no. 3 (2007).
41. David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 12.
42. Sally Hunter Graham, "Woodrow Wilson, Alice Paul and the Woman Suffrage Movement," *Political Science Quarterly* 98, no. 4 (1984): 666.
43. Adams and Keene, *Alice Paul*, 165.
44. William and Mary Lavender, "Suffragists Storm over Washington," *American History*, no. October (2003): 33.
45. Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, 284–85.
46. Lavender, "Suffragists Storm over Washington"; and Katherine Feo Kelly, "Performing Prison: Dress, Modernity, and the Radical Suffrage Body," *Fashion Theory* 15, no. 3 (2011).
47. Quotes are from the Project Gutenberg E-text of *Jailed for Freedom* by Doris Stevens, accessed July 15, 2013, www.gutenberg.org/catalog/world/readfile?fk_files=1452862. Page numbers as displayed in the E-text will follow each quote.
48. "Accuse Jailers of Suffragists," *New York Times*, November 17, 1917.
49. Wood, *The Freedom of the Streets*, 5.

50. Christine Stansell concisely discusses the movement's leaders attitudes toward the reactions that imprisoned suffragists had at the forced contact with black convicts, both female and male. Christine Stansell, *The Feminist Promise: 1972 to the Present* (New York: Random House, 2010), 172, 440.
51. American suffragists' hunger strikes began on November 15, 1917. They were the first organized use of such form of protest in the United States and were inspired by the British suffrage movement that, in turn, had adopted it following the example of Irish inmates in British jails. *Jailed for Freedom* offers a detailed account of this protest.
52. The German five-reel motion picture on the British suffrage movement *Die Suffragette* (Projektions AG "Union," 1913) also included the treatment in a prison scene.
53. One exception is the journalistic piece that Djuna Barnes published in the *New York World* in 1914 "How it Feels to be Forcibly Fed"—even though the political reference is to the British suffrage movement. For an interpretation of Barnes's piece as "spectacular confession" that inflects sensational "infotainment" with militant struggle see Barbara Green, *Spectacular Confessions: Autobiography, Performative Activism, and the Sites of Suffrage, 1905–1938* (London: MacMillan, 1997), 170–82.
54. See Ellen Davidson, "A Hunger for Justice," *The Indypendent*, 2013, accessed September 1, 2013, https://www.indypendent.org/2013/08/17/hunger-justice. As to force-feeding in Guantánamo see the whole exchange in the "Room for Debate" column under "The Ethics of Force-Feeding Inmates," *New York Times*, May 1, 2013; as to the California prison strike see Maggie Caldwell and Josh Harkinson, "50 Days without Food: The California Prison Hunger Explained," *Mother Jones*, 2013, accessed September 2, 2013, http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2013/08/50-days-california-prisons-hunger-strike-explainer.
55. See Judith Butler, "Indefinite Detention," in *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (New York: Verso, 2004).
56. Donald E. Pease, "The Global Homeland State: Bush's Biopolitical Settlement," *boundary 2* 30, no. 3 (2003): 13.
57. Caleb Smith, "Detention without Subjects: Prison and the Poetics of Living Death," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 50, no. 3 (2008):

244. Caleb Smith takes the cue from Butler, Pease, and other theorists to produce an original counter-argument about how the systematic dehumanization of the detainees has been historically embedded in the American prison system since its beginning.
58. Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 4.
59. See Lumsden, *Rampant Women*, 237.
60. Lucy Burns to NWP members, Nov. 17, Reels 53, NWP Papers as quoted in Lumsden, *Rampant Women*, 126.
61. Ruth Leys, *From Guilt to Shame: Auschwitz and After* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 1–4.
62. Cf. Doris Stevens, *Jailed for Freedom: American Women Win the Vote*, ed. Carol O'Hare (Troutdale: New Sage Press, [1920] 1995).
63. Kelly, "Performing Prison," 302–3.
64. "Suffragists in Prison," *Suffragists*, January 4, 1919.
65. "The Prison Special," *Suffragists*, February 22, 1919; "Prison Special Arouses the South," *Suffragists*, March 8, 1919; "Prison Special in California," *Suffragist*, March 8, 1919; and "Suffragists Off in Prison Special," *New York Times*, February 16, 1919.
66. The suffrage amendment was initially introduced to Congress in 1878 by Senator A. A. Sargent of California. Since it was repeatedly rejected and proposed through the years, it came to be known as the Susan B. Anthony Amendment because other amendments to the constitution used the numbers 16 through 18 before the suffrage amendment was passed. Mary Jo Buhle and Paul Buhle, *The Concise History of Woman Suffrage: Selections from the History of Woman Suffrage* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005).
67. Robert Booth Fowler and Spencer Jones, "Carrie Chapman Catt and the Last Years of the Struggle for Woman Suffrage: 'The Winning Plan,'" in Jean H. Baker, ed., *Votes for Women: The Struggle for Suffrage Revisited* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 135.
68. See Harriet Hanson Robinson, *Loom and Spindle or Life among the Early Mill Girls* (New York: T. Y. Crowell, 1898), 83–86. For the Lowell Strikes see Thomas Dublin, "Women, Work, and the Family: Female Operatives in the Lowell Mills, 1830–1860," *Feminist Studies* 3, Autumn (1975).

69. Two exceptions and notable examples of foreign-born women who embraced with equal enthusiasm and prominent results the labor and the suffrage cause were Rose Winslow (born Ruza Wenclawska in Poland) and Rose Schneiderman (born Rachel Schneiderman in Russia).
70. For a more general discussion of the strike see Roger Waldinger, "ILGWU: Women, Industry Structure and Collective Action," in *Women Work and Protest* (Boston: Routledge, 1985) and Mary E. Triece, *Protests and Popular Culture: Women in the U.S. Labor Movement, 1894–1917* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2001).
71. Alice Kessler-Harris notes that in the shirtwaist industry, Russian Jews represented 55 percent of the female workforce, Italians 35 percent, and native-born Americans 7 percent. Alice Kessler-Harris, "Organizing the Unorganizable: Three Jewish Women and Their Union," *Labor History*, Winter (1976): 6. See also Nancy L. Green, *Ready-to-Wear, Ready-to-Work* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 54.
72. Dubois, *Harriot Stanton Blatch*, 308.
73. See Buhle, *Women and American Socialism*, 176–78.
74. Clara Lemlich, "Leader tells why 40,000 Girls Struck," *New York Evening Journal*, November 26, 1909, 3. Historian Nan Enstad mentions Lemlich's article noting that, although Lemlich is listed as the author, a preamble explains that the story was actually told to a reporter. It is still the best available source produced by a striking worker herself. Nan Enstad, *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure: Working Women, Popular Culture, and Labor Politics at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 234.
75. "Girls Strikers Go to the City Hall," *New York Times*, December 4, 1909.
76. The article more often referenced in this respect is the following: Sarah Comstock, "The Uprising of the Girls," *Collier's* no. 25 December, (1909). See also Deirdre Clemente, "Striking Ensembles: The Importance of Clothing on the Picket Line," *Labor Studies Journal* 30, no. 1 (2006): 9.
77. "Girls Strikers Go to the City Hall," *New York Times*, December 4, 1909.
78. Theresa S. Malkiel, "The Jobless Girls," *New York Call*, December 1909, 2.

79. In her introductory essay to the 1990 reprint of the book, Françoise Basch mentions that the number of copies originally printed by the Cooperative Press and the details of the book's distribution are unknown. Yet it existed both in hardback and paperback editions and it was advertised in socialist circles as a glorious story of working-class life dedicated to the "nameless heroines of the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike." Françoise Basch, "The Shirtwaist Strike in History and Myth," introductory essay to *The Diary of a Shirtwaist Striker* by Theresa S. Malkiel (Ithaca: ILR Press, 1990), 62–63
80. Theresa S. Malkiel, *The Diary of a Shirtwaist Striker* (Ithaca: ILR Press, [1910] 1990). For some critical reading see Ruth Jacknow Marcowitz, "*The Diary of a Shirtwaist Striker* by Theresa S. Malkiel," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 12, no. 4 (1993); and Julia Stein, "Tangled Threads: Two Novels About Women in the Textile Trades, *Call the Darkness Light* by Nancy Zaroulis and *Folly* by Maureen Brady," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 26, no. 1/2 (1998).
81. Enstad, *Ladies of Labor*, 86.
82. Michail Bakhtin, "Rabelais and His World (Excerpt)," in Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan, eds., *Literary Theory: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1968), 686.
83. My interpretation of Malkiel's work has appeared in a different context and in an earlier version in the following book chapter "Mothering the Nation, Unmothering the Self: New Women and Maternal Narratives in the Progressive Era" in Isabel Heinemann, ed., *Inventing the Modern American Family: Family Values and Social Change in 20th-century U.S.*, (Frankfurt: Campus, 2012), 82–102.
84. All employers agreed on considering "girls superior to boys, but inferior to men, and cheaper than either." Quoted in Martha Banta, *Taylored Lives: Narrative Productions in the Age of Taylor, Veblen and Ford*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 164.
85. Activist Rose Schneiderman tells a legendary story of confronting an abusive employer who justified his manhandling of the employees by saying that they were like children to him. The workers' reply was that they would rather be orphans. See Rose Schneiderman and Lucy Goldthwaite, *All for One* (New York: Paul S. Eriksson, 1967), 86–87.
86. Bakhtin, "Rabelais and His World (Excerpt)," 687.

87. Annelise Orleck, *Common Sense and a Little Fire* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995).
88. For a theorization of vulnerability as it befalls the performer see Janelle G. Reinelt and Joseph R. Roach, "General Introduction," in Janelle G. Reinelt and Joseph R. Roach, eds., *Critical Theory and Performance* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1992), 13.
89. Sloan, *The Loud Silents*, 67; and Brownlow, *Behind the Mask of Innocence*, 466.
90. "Girls Strikers Go to the City Hall," *New York Times*, December 4, 1909.
91. Basch, "The Shirtwaist Strike," 45.
92. Enstad, *Ladies of Labor*, 91.
93. Mary Brown Sumner, "The Spirit of the Strikers," *The Survey* 22 (1910): 550–55.
94. Wood, *The Freedom of the Streets*, 9.
95. Nancy L. Green, "Women and Immigrant in the Sweatshop: Categories of Labor Segmentation Revisited," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 38, no. 3 (1996): 411. Also see Daniel E. Bender, *Sweated Work, Weak Bodies: Anti-Sweatshop Campaigns and Languages of Labor* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004).
96. Daniel E. Bender, "Too Much of Distasteful Masculinity," *Journal of Women's History* 15, no. 4 (2004): 96.
97. Basch, "The Shirtwaist Strike," 10, 17.
98. Kim Voss, *The Making of American Exceptionalism: The Knights of Labor and Class Formation in the 19th Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 52.
99. Steven J. Ross, *Working-Class Hollywood: Silent Film and the Shaping of Class in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).
100. "Review by Walton," *The Moving Picture News*, August 20, 1910.
101. . *The Crime of Carelessness* (Edison, 1912).
102. Ross, *Working-Class Hollywood*, 96.
103. *The High Road* premiered at His Majesty's Theatre on October 14, 1912, in Montreal. It got to New York about a month later where it ran at the Hudson Theater for seventy-one performances until January 1913. When the play closed in New York, the same company went on a one-year road tour that took the play to dozens of American cities. The film

version appeared in 1915. For an overview of the production history and the reception see Loren K. Ruff, *Edward Sheldon* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982).

104. "The High Road is Theatrical Mosaic," *New York Times*, November 20, 1912.

105. "The High Road (1915): Full Synopsis," Turner Classic Movies, accessed June 28, 2013, www.tcm.com/tcmdb/title/498074/The-High-Road/full-synopsis.html.

106. Ruff, *Edward Sheldon*, 114–17.

107. "120,000 Pay Tribute to the Fire Victims," *New York Times*, April 6, 1911.

108. Buhle, *Women and American Socialism*, 200.

109. See "Laborers Sip Tea in Fifth Avenue," *New York Times*, April 11, 1907; "Suffragists to Aid Girls Waist Strikers," *New York Times*, December 2, 1909; and "Strikers Divide on Suffrage," *New York Times*, December 3, 1909.

110. Buhle, *Women and American Socialism*, 194.

111. Dubois, *Harriot Stanton Blatch*, 116–18.

112. "120,000 Pay Tribute to the Fire Victims," *New York Times*, April 6, 1911.

Chapter 2

Girls Who Act Up: Writing Reform and the Uses of Abolition

> We lived and moved at that time, with great intensity, in Mrs. Stowe's novel. . . . If the amount of life represented in such a work is measurable by the ease with which representation is taken up and carried further, carried even violently furthest, the fate of Mrs. Stowe's picture was conclusive: it simply sat down wherever it lighted and made itself, so to speak at home; thither multitudes flocked afresh and there, in each case, it rose to its height again and went, with all its vivacity and good faith, though all its motions.
> —Henry James, *A Small Boy and Others*, 1913

In the chronicle of her first arrest, suffragist Doris Stevens could not help but remark that the officer taking her to the "unknown terrors of the workhouse" resembled Simon Legree (107). To the bourgeois lady, shoved along Pennsylvania Station with "disorderlies, prostitutes and thieves," it felt only natural to be literally "moving" into Mrs. Stowe's novel and occupying the discursive space of the abused black slave. Some seventy years after the first publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the novel's paradigm of sentimentality still informed the perception of utter injustice suffered on the basis of a biological determinant. The constellation of social disorder, prominent but unconventional womanhood, and gendered abuse that conjured up *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in Stevens's mind might have appeared coincidental to the suffragist, but it had punctuated American cultural history before. Similarly civic-minded ladies had brought together the political clout of Stowe's abolitionist project with social problems of their own concern. In 1912, for example, Jane Addams praised Stowe's novel in her book on white slavery, *A New Conscience and an Ancient Evil*, while drawing a parallel between the abolition of slavery in the past and the need to abolish prostitution in the near future. To address the germane issue of tenement prostitution in 1888, renowned poet Alice Wellington Rollins penned her only novel,

Uncle Tom's Tenement, by extracting Stowe's characters from the plantations, immersing them in a New York slum, and wrapping them in new, Irish skins.[1]

As Robin Bernstein has demonstrated in her analysis of the material culture of sentimentality derived from *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, "performance can detach characters from one context and transplant them to another," creating meanings that go beyond—and sometimes against—those embedded in the work that originally contained them.[2] This is particularly true of the characters lifted from Stowe's work and disseminated in a multitude of re-inscriptions, but also of abolition taken as a template for social reform, extracted from the context of slavery, and applied to urban prostitution. In pairing Rollins's social fiction with Addams's reformative writings, I will investigate two phases of what I call the performance of abolitionist paradigms with regard to prostitution in the Progressive Era. With Rollins, I address the phase before the white slavery scare, demonstrating how, at the height of the Gilded Age, the association between chattel slavery and sexual vulnerability was narrativized to excoriate the gendered consequences of irresponsible capitalism and call attention to the plight of immigrant women. With Addams, I dive right into the middle of the white slavery scare and analyze how abolition as a historical period became the "state of fantasy" that informed the abolitionist position against prostitution for a wide camp of reformers. Taken together the two authors illuminate the peculiar position of urban women with respect to the racial, sexual, and generational subtext that coursed through the Progressive Era and furrowed the double consciousness of reform work.

HOW THE BLACK FOLKS BECAME IRISH

In the "captivity literature of post-frontier America,"[3] stories of migration from a premodern, rural reality to a modern, urban society often featured a chaste American country girl who falls prey to ruthless procurers as soon as she sets foot in the tentacular city.[4] Before the white slavery tracts perpetuated this trope, a group of novelists had treated the figure of the urban prostitute from different perspectives.

The only woman among them, Alice Wellington Rollins brought the vehemence of the social critic into the aesthetic form of the sentimental novel and anticipated the concerns of naturalism by telling an unapologetic story of sexual exploitation and metropolitan abjection.[5] Considered her most important literary endeavor, *Uncle Tom's Tenement* is an apparently simple mimetic operation that replicates Stowe's work in numerous details as well as in its macroscopic features.[6] Rollins was perfectly aware of having "yoked her wagon to a star," but unoriginality was to her less of a concern than the effectiveness of the social lesson she was trying to impart.

The novel chronicles the vicissitudes of various characters in and around the tenement where Tom, an initially industrious and abstemious Irish immigrant, lives with his large family. Rollins's heroine, Cassie, is Tom's oldest daughter. Beautiful and gifted, Cassie determines to improve her family's economic situation through honest, specialized work. After being fired from a department store for rejecting the advances of a supervisor, Cassie is forced to abandon her aspiration to become a stenographer, since all potential employers seem to be interested only in her body. Once she reverts to domestic work, Cassie commences her moral decline, a progress whose first step is her sexual initiation, within domestic walls, by her employer's son. Eventually, she accepts concubinage and unwed motherhood as the best and only way to support herself and her helpless relatives. Cassie's story intertwines with that of two wealthy Anglo-American families: the financially troubled Selbys, temporarily interested in tenement speculation, and the solidly affluent Sinclairs, whose daughter, Effie, is so reform-minded as to consider a missionary career in the service of the urban poor. Like Stowe's Shelby family, Rollins's Selby family is good-hearted but ultimately unable to realize their charitable intentions with regard to the indigent. They cheerfully buy a tenement, animated equally by the economic prospects as by the pseudo-philanthropic belief that the improvement of a degraded building will improve the lot of its inhabitants as well. Almost immediately, they are forced to sell the property to cover their losses in some hazardous financial speculations and, while abandoning their edifying plans, they also fail to protect the

tenement denizens nearer and dearer to them: their former nurse Eliza and her son Harry. The Selbys, embodying the attempts at benevolent governance of the Anglo-Saxon caste, offer formal support to Eliza and her inventor husband, George, but they are too distant to comprehend the poverty into which the family is descending. In their paternalistic ignorance, they accelerate the process of decay to the extent that Eliza, deserted by a husband who "goes west" after his patent gets stolen, gives her son to traveling missionaries and puts her newborn daughter into an orphanage just before disappearing into the underworld. Rollins's Sinclair family, whose daughter Effie embodies Stowe's Progressive little Eva, is a satire of those American aristocrats whose younger generations embrace radical social transformation, but only so long as it does not affect the status quo. The circle around the Sinclairs includes Benham, a reform-minded journalist engrossed in civilizing a homeless newspaper boy; Lois Fenton, an aristocratic widow suddenly impoverished by her husband's death; and the Damrells, a family of manufacturers whose patriarch's shrewdness manages to curb both his son's penchant for socialist "hallucinations" as well as his employees' intentions to strike.

Taken as a whole, *Uncle Tom's Tenement* remains a hybrid piece in which the anti-slavery mold inevitably shapes the novel in terms of race, although race is never explicitly mentioned. This evasiveness is essential to Rollins's use of abolition as a rhetorical weapon whose many useful ammunitions—namely Stowe's characters and the ethical capital of the battle itself—are transported into an apparently de-racialized camp. The novel, in fact, addresses the "complexly triangulated relationship among Anglo-Americans, Irish immigrants and African Americans" only by implication.[7] As Matthew Frye Jacobson contends, no one minimally familiar with the regulations and counter-regulations produced by the United States to govern black and white intermingling "could ever suppose that being a 'Celt,' say, was tantamount to being some kind of European negro."[8] Rollins skirts such fallacy by leaving race exclusively in the web of intertextuality and ethnicity with the implicit knowledge of the reader. This double erasure allows the traces of blackness derived from the abolitionist model to seep through from beneath the Irish

names, making the reader wonder, from time to time, about the actual color of these urban poor. As a result, the superimposition of the immigrant experience on African American history raises difficult, if subliminal, questions about the possibility of intimacy between the races in the United States rather than suggesting any easy answers.[9]

The fraught combination of sympathy and stigma inherited from the abolitionist tradition filters into *Uncle Tom's Tenement* to continue the semantic commerce initiated by the labor discourse with the coinage of the term "wage slave." This reinflection of economic dynamics is peculiar to Rollins's adoption of abolition and emerges in her rewriting of slavery primarily as a form of organization of labor and only secondarily as a racially inflected phenomenon. This angle allows for the development of some of the economic reflections contained in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to expose the iniquity of untrammeled capitalism in the 1880s. In spite of her severe condemnations, however, the author makes no secret of her disdain for socialism; highly skeptical about the appropriateness of state intervention, she actually presaged the conservative, rather than liberal, positions of the Progressive movement. Contending that "nothing will, in reform, take the place of individual conscientious landlordism," Rollins seems to make a plea for ethic liberalism based on the assumption that the "individual" is not necessarily an individual person but, more advisably, an individual corporation.[10] This perspective, elaborated in her rendition of the tenement as a novel plantation, implicitly transfers the paternalistic residues of abolition onto the immigrant masses, who are presented as victims of an unregulated market, insofar as they are incapable of "conscientious" self-management. The unresolved tension between structural oppression and self-determination also defines Rollins's soft-spoken yet frank exploration of female morality. Far more complex than her unsympathetic *Forum* essay of 1887,[11] Rollins's fictional treatment of immorality avoids the "callousness-to-vice" argument to depict prostitution as a by-product of the insufferable relationship between "women and economics." *Uncle Tom's Tenement* reveals an ideological mixture of economic liberalism, forceful compassion for women, and evolutionary nuances that resonates with what Daniel Levine, in discussing Jane Addams, called "native

radicalism," or the "American version" of a "sort of socialism."[12] This synthesis of republican ideals with egalitarian impulses and capitalist preconceptions advocated reformative solutions that should not come into open conflict with business. Presupposing that society was utterly mismanaged, but not structurally iniquitous, this belief is necessarily at odds with the unsparing rendition of tenement life that the novel pursues, and accounts for the conflicts that the novel fails to resolve, especially in its treatment of class relations. Yet if we agree with Berlant that the very citation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* "is a sign that an aesthetic work can be powerful enough to move the people who read it to identifying against their own interests,"[13] then *Uncle Tom's Tenement* can be said to manifest a genuine desire for a world without conflict, where the subjects can communally "feel right" about justice.[14] In her serious proposal to demolish middle-class institutions such as philanthropy and business privacy, for example, Rollins demonstrates that the intentions of the "sentimental fiction of purpose" are not less direct than those of naturalism in its "attempt(s) to redefine the social order."[15] In this light, Rollins's performance of abolition continues "the unfinished business of sentimentality" that soared in the postbellum period but that was not completely abandoned even in the heyday of naturalist aesthetics.

TENEMENT GIRLS: STORIES OF FACTS AND FEELINGS

The decade that followed *Uncle Tom's Tenement* saw the rise of the tenement tale and the young working woman as a prominent protagonist. Incarnating the impossibility for women to support themselves honestly within a ruthless economy, Rollins's creations Eliza and Cassie were important precedents for the unfortunate working girls of the boom of slum literature to come, and they also constituted two exemplarily resilient wayward women. Eliza and Cassie—a former nurse turned seamstress and a former stenographer turned servant, respectively—diverge from the literary types commonly defining Irish American womanhood in the late nineteenth century, especially in their thoroughly traced declined from the status of Irish mothers to that of

prostitutes. In her pursuit of quasi-naturalistic representation, Rollins shows some impatience with the unwritten rules of the genteel literary marketplace. Unlike the non-fictional domain of reform publications, in which authors had been fairly forward since the antebellum period, novelistic conventions called for reticence or condemnation on the topic of prostitution. For all these reasons, Rollins occupies the chronological and thematic turning point between the reform-minded Victorian novelists and the Progressive Era muckrakers.

In the 1870s, penitent prostitutes made cameos in novels of both Harriet Beecher Stowe and Louisa May Alcott, but Maggie in Stowe's *We and Our Neighbors* and Rachel in Alcott's *Work* are so marginal that their plight is almost lost on the reader. In 1886, the California author Joaquin Miller, probably trying to revitalize a literary reputation that his frontier poems did not sustain for long, wrote *The Destruction of Gotham*, a deliberately provocative novel whose protagonist, the New York prostitute Dottie Lane, is a former brothel inmate reminiscent of the crazed prostitute Martha of Dickens's *David Copperfield*.[16] Yet since Miller's Dottie was constructed in accordance with mid-century canons of the loss of sanity consequent upon fallen virtue, we can assert that *Uncle Tom's Tenement*, appearing two years later, is the first novel that explores the causes of prostitution with modern eyes and an acute attention to the socio-economic mechanisms of urban life. In this sense, Rollins's work significantly pre-dates the iconic fictional portrayals of city prostitutes, such as *The Evil That Men Do* (1889) by the New York author Edgar Fawcett, and Stephen Crane's classic *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (1893).[17] Maggie probably remains one of the best-known Irish American fictional figures and the novella has become a canonical text of naturalism with a great influence on understandings of Irish identity, tenement life, and urban prostitution to this day. By contrast, Rollins's *Uncle Tom's Tenement*—despite its early and ambitious treatment of slum life and female identity—is hardly ever mentioned in secondary literature.

Perhaps because it was lost in the sea of Stowe's emulators, or because it still maneuvered between a realist and a naturalist conception of character, *Uncle Tom's Tenement* seldom features in

studies of sentimentality as well, even though, seen in the light of Jane Tompkins's analysis of sentimental fiction, it respects the features of a female genre that stretches certain rules of formal economy in the attempt to propose "solutions for social and political predicaments."[18] In fact, Rollins uses the conventions of the genre—the coincidental plot, reliance on stereotypes, and an abundance of tears—to succeed in transforming "a privatized middle class into a socially conscious one" through mechanisms of empathetic recognition.[19] Sabine Haenni has observed that, to invite such empathy, Rollins situated "domesticated versions of the immigrant poor in the middle-class home, not differently from the way in which photographer Lewis Hine relied on the intensity of close ups and portraits for his child labor projects" to reveal homely subjects to the wealthy classes.[20] These "pictures"—the domestic servants, the poor women taking in the laundry for the wealthy, the street children met on the slumming tours—are for Rollins Trojan horses carrying concealed civic values. Her endearing "close-ups," calculated to subvert mainstream notions of the picturesque, are accompanied with a documentaristic abundance of disturbing "facts," not unlike the famous denunciatory works to come, such as *The Jungle*, a novel whose author boasted of its being "packed with facts" as a demonstration of its intrinsic value.[21] But unlike Sinclair, who famously hit the reader in the stomach when aiming for the heart, Rollins deploys characters that astound the reader for their extreme creativity in devising survival strategies, rather than for the extreme ways in which they are inevitably crushed. This perspective allows Rollins to assume a critical stance with respect to the spectacularization of poverty in tenement fiction and also to sidestep—almost successfully—the pitfalls of the scenic vignette, namely ethnic essentialism and environmental determinism. Thus, in spite of the somewhat stylized fictional treatment of the Irish immigrants, most ghetto residents—especially women—in *Uncle Tom's Tenement* struggle with their environment to form their own identity,[22] rather than succumb to it. While Rollins's male characters run away, commit suicide, and become alcoholics, there is no amount of degradation or disgrace that can force ghetto women to capitulate, take their own lives, or be written out of the novel. In casting the inevitable

waywardness of the working woman as a trial that is stoically endured and even embraced, Rollins marks a significant departure from, for example, the widely circulated attitudes of the notable "ghetto painter" Jacob Riis, with whom she shared an open distaste for slumlords, but who also made the working woman the particular target of his aversion. [23]

Among the authors who, in the years that followed Rollins's novel, dealt with the topic of prostitution, James W. Sullivan was extremely modest when it came to the morality of the tenement girls, never exploring the undersides or pitfalls of their situation with regard to sexuality. Sullivan represents, Laura Hapke suggests, a "prime example of the evasive literary attitude towards the sexuality of the working class girl."[24] Julian Ralph, a reporter for the New York daily broadsheet *The Sun*, also composed a series of stories on the life of German and Irish shop girls that were popular enough to be collected in book form under the title *People We Pass: Stories of Life Among the Masses of New York City* (1896). According to Hapke, these productions are "men's tales of the feminine . . . other-half" and tend to replicate the period's anxiety about the morality of the working woman, while failing to recognize the newness and importance of the nascent female identity as wage-earner. [25] Nevertheless, by producing unromanticized renditions of the urban backdrop, these authors began to defy cultural prejudices against women in the workplace and the sexuality of the female worker in ways that genteel labor fiction, and the shop girl Cinderellas of dime-novel author Laura Jean Libbey, could not. [26]

Offering a woman's account of the "feminine other-half," Rollins is as candid as Crane, but, more bravely, keeps her prostitutes alive throughout the novel. In this respect, *Uncle Tom's Tenement* can be read "as a gendering machine tracing paths towards survival through plots of feminine feeling."[27] The men's versions of the prostitute's story generally do not permit tarnished femininity to survive and include untimely death as the only redemption for her sins as well as her personal suffering, if only to unite the reading public in communal grieving over a life lost. Writers like Sullivan and Crane were arguably more in tune with the literary conventions of earlier seduction tales than

Rollins, whose politico-sentimental aesthetic allowed her to incorporate the topos of ruinous seduction, without making it the principal motor of existential degradation, but rather a symptom of a faulty economic system. Thus, in her novel the theme of death and self-sacrifice escapes the sentimental model pursued by Stowe—but also by Joaquim Miller and Edgar Fawcett—as well as Crane's naturalist determinism. Stowe follows the moral theology of American domesticity, where death is the badge of the martyr saint; in Miller and Fawcett's variations, the death of the fallen woman also has overtones of expiation. On yet a different plane, Crane's naturalism emphasizes the environmental influences on his protagonist, producing a narrative in which the mud of the slums inevitably suffocates the flower.[28] For Rollins's fallen heroines, there is no sanctifying or punitive sinner's death, but nor is there a death determined by an evil or corrupted environment. Rollins's heroines survive, painfully, and live on in a shattered existence, deprived equally of an eschatological vision as well as of any opportunity for uplifting alliances with the socially privileged.[29]

This helpless condition represents one of the most striking divergences from Stowe's model. As Heike Paul has observed, by juxtaposing Tom's fate of being sold down South to Eliza's opportunity to make her way to freedom, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* gives "two blueprints, a narrative of descent, and a narrative of ascent" that impoverished European immigrants could also use to make sense of their American experience.[30] However in *Uncle Tom's Tenement*, Rollins seems to suggest descent as the only narrative available to New York's immigrants, and to women in particular, thus echoing a certain strand of the white slavery debate that lurked in the background of Stowe's publication. Only a couple of years before the appearance of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the press had given great publicity to incidents of Irish and German girls being kidnapped and sold into slavery.[31] The kidnappings were made possible by the helplessness of many immigrants, by the fact that it was not unusual to see lighter-skinned slaves, and by the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, which allowed the North to be become the new ground "for various practices of slavery."[32] While Stowe does not refer to this phenomenon directly, it has been argued that it constituted

one of the key points of the abolitionists' arguments.[33] Therefore Rollins's Irish Eliza and Cassie are not simple copies of Stowe's characters, but key figures embodying the bi-racial genealogy of the early twentieth-century discourse on white slavery.

PLAYING REFORM: FOSTER HOMES, DOLLHOUSES, AND OTHER DANGEROUS PLACES OF INTIMACY

In *Uncle Tom's Tenement*, the relations between prospective social reformers and the objects of their attention are hampered by numerous factors. Some are conjunctural, like the reformers' amateurishness and the sporadic bad faith of their class, while others are rooted in lingering social Darwinistic beliefs. Yet in *Uncle Tom's Tenement*, reform is invoked as necessary, even as the rhetoric of care defining the relationships between old-stock Americans and the Irish immigrants reveals for Rollins an instructive framework that illustrates, beyond the essentializing undertones, a specific problem in the dominant conception of reform of the late Gilded Age. Anticipating the professionalizing and institutionalizing urges of the Progressives, Rollins sees as particularly deleterious the naïve expansion of ideas of home and family to address the immigrant problem, especially while the immigrants remain shackled in circumstances that prevent them from creating *their* home and family. The offer of a treacherous intimacy to the dispossessed produces, in Rollins's narrative, various forms of domestic prisons disguised as pedagogical or charitable experiments. The examples offered by the characters of Andy, Eliza, and Cassie present immigrants trapped in dysfunctional versions of home, all illuminating the hazardous interclass proximity in which care is given, received, or eluded.

Andy Highflyer, street Arab and newspaper boy, is, like his literary double Topsy, a child born with a razor-sharp wit in a context marked by sexual exploitation and economic inequality. Like Topsy, he becomes the selected object of an educational design when the self-appointed educator, Benham, takes him under his wing. Combining a certain craving for "pictures" with a paternalistic confidence in his mission, Benham exemplifies what Abraham Cahan saw in Jakob Riis: an "amateur slumologist."[34] His program of re-education aims at

normalizing the unruly ethnic child before he subverts society from within,[35] and, in line with a developing Progressive project that was later supported by Jane Addams and John Dewey, posits the creation of new habits—through cleanliness, discipline, and training—as crucial to the building of a national character. Yet the civilizing process comes at the cost of the important social virtues of shared responsibility and solidarity that Andy possessed before he was informally "adopted." Andy's talent for social organization manifested itself in the society of mutual support that he formed with his street friends. This virtuous alliance anticipates the distinction between "good and bad gangs" made by Judge Ben Lindsey, the reformer who promoted the juvenile court movement.[36] Lindsey disapproved of reformers who tried to break up gangs indiscriminately and would probably have disapproved of Benham too, since he disrupts the social community and isolates Andy from his peers, thus crushing the nascent civic sense of the children. In terms of his perception of urban youth, Benham is a suspicious and authoritarian reformer, less akin to Lindsey than to Riis, who warned that the Street Arabs "were destined, if unchecked and unredeemed, to impose a regime of rampant gang violence on the entire city."[37] Redeeming Andy through domestication, Benham lures the child into the comfort of his middle-class home, where Andy irreparably loses his sense of community to become the individualist prophet of Spenserian evolutionism (285). In the abrupt deterioration of Andy's civic sensibility, Rollins evidences a danger inherent in the cult of home of the nineteenth century, a danger analogous to what Richard Sennet has called the "seductive tyranny" of a Western conception of intimacy that is detrimental to sociability.[38] For better or for worse, the education of Andy into the ways of a civilized American neutralizes not only the streetwise alien, but also the "public man" in him.

Benham's reformative relationship to Andy reveals a combination of attraction and objectifying condescension toward the Irish immigrants, reminiscent of the dynamics of "love and theft" that Eric Lott has mapped as the conceptual motor of blackface minstrelsy.[39] In a similar way, although in a different home, Eliza and her son Harry try to maintain their dignity while navigating the ambiguous web of sentiments

that tie them to Eliza's employers, the Selbys, but to no avail. Whereas Benham is a systematic, albeit amateurish, reformer, the Selbys are absentmindedly benevolent, hence managing to turn a blind eye to Eliza's descent into disastrous poverty while continuing the envious scrutiny of her attractive appearance and the demeaning, if affectionate, bantering with her son. In this perspective, because of the aristocrats' carelessness, the upper-class home is no safer to Irish Eliza than the slaveholder's mansion is to the black female slave. Conversely, nominal freedom prompts Irish Eliza to make choices that appear rational, such as placing her children in foster care until she can support them, but that compromise her family and her possibility of eventually building a durable home. Conscious that she has forfeited human sympathy by sending away her children, Eliza can only revert to literary sympathy, borrowing the consolation of the tears shed for her fictional twin:

> She remembered the slave girl Eliza in "Uncle Tom's Cabin" . . . she remembered Eliza whose Harry had been sold, would have been snatched from her arms. . . . How people wept over the story! Would they not weep more bitter, more scalding tears of sympathy *if they could see* her now, not parted from her child, but holding him out in her arms to whoever would come and take him . . . ? Will no one save him not from the slave hunter . . . but from me, from his mother, who can only give him too little food, too little air, indecency for shelter and vice for his companions? (169–170; my emphasis)

In her invocation of Stowe's character, Irish Eliza encodes the paradox that envisions slum women as spectacles while they remain, at the same time, invisible as social actors. In Eliza's case, the main source of her distress is a form of disappearance from the public sphere that Hannah Arendt called the "privation of privacy."[40] Her cry—"if they could see!"—is the lament of a person who is, in Arendt's words, "deprived of things essential to a truly human life . . . deprived of the reality that comes from being seen and heard by others."[41] Yet given Eliza's ambiguous racial identity, her lament not only seems to foreshadow the invisibility of the *Invisible Man*—"I am invisible,

understand, simply because people refuse to see me"[42] —but is also compatible with some of the underlying assumptions of invisibility that Ralph Ellison delineates in his essays. "Invisibility," he proposes, "springs from a great formlessness of Negro life in which all values are in flux, and where those institutions and patterns of life that mold the white American's personality are missing."[43] Comparably, immigrant communities are perceived as formless by a "blind" white upper class because of their fluidity of values, which corrode solidarity, thwart possibilities for coordinated action, and make them excessively permeable to the false promise of being soon included in the larger forms of American life, if only they submit and work hard. In this respect, Eliza suffers from the emotional bareness of the urban environment as well as from the skeletal "vision" of reform efforts. Furthermore, the hasty farewell she receives, after having been the virtuous touchstone for all the mothers in the novel, reveals a residual Victorian substratum maintaining a belief in the irreparability of lost virtue.

At the same time, Eliza's being declared beyond rescue and "gone" as soon as she is spotted in an opium den suggests a process of elimination from the urban social scene whose final stage, the stage of waste, coincides with Eliza's prostitution. The ideas of use, elimination, and waste became particularly relevant in the Progressive hygienic ideology, and their indiscriminate application in the industrial process were harshly criticized by muckraking journalists and novelists.[44] However, the revelation of Eliza's expendability in the context of the bourgeois employment of immigrant female labor makes Rollins a precursor of this critical strand, and inaugurates the idea of the urban economy as a digestive system in which women in particular are used up to a greater degree than men. When Eliza is in her prime, the family that employed her as a nurse got the best out of her in terms of mothering and educating potential. In a sense, the Selby family symbolically "stole Eliza's milk,"[45] as confirmed by her subsequent incapacity to properly "nourish" her own daughters, who die very young. Once damaged by the loss of her little girls, Eliza can no longer attend to the aristocrats' children, so she is downgraded to caring for their clothing and, after that, unfit for anything else, she services their sexual desires. Completely

digested by the urban machine, stripped of all usefulness and severed from her affective connections, Eliza becomes waste—a prostitute—and like waste she is quickly eliminated from the novel. Still, Rollins's refusal to completely dispose of her character through death underscores the peculiarity of the female condition: at the point at which the body of a man simply ceases to be a usable resource, a woman's body continues to fuel a subterranean economy while raising scandal in the eyes of those who reap its profits. Unable to successfully navigate the urban system, but also unable to leave it, the immigrant woman in the brothel remains an "indigestible" by-product and a disquieting reminder of the lack of care that upper classes can show toward those below them.

Whereas Eliza suffers from invisibility, Cassie suffers from overexposure and grieves her lack of privacy. She first appears in the novel captured by the equally morbid gazes of first Harley—the predator—and then Effie—the childish philanthropist. When, later, during her wanderings in search of a job, she realizes that even Benham knows her by sight, she is overwhelmed by the shame that constant exposure generates:

> Did the poor live in a glass house? Did everything she said or did or thought open to the prying glance of the whole world? . . . Did this man, to whom she had come for help because he was a stranger know her name, her home, her agony? Could he track her, watch her, put his finger on her trouble, know . . . her exquisite suffering, her appalling anxiety? Was there any refuge for her than the waves of the East River? (129)

Just as Cassie introjects the lewd offers she receives in response to her job announcement as traumatic sexual experiences, she also perceives Benham's benevolence as an attack meant to expose her "exquisite suffering" to a sadistic voyeurism. The image of the tenement as a glass house is conflated by Rollins with that of a dollhouse, the coquettish metaphor that Effie finds appropriate to explain her new reformative interest: "Papa . . . I'm sick of my baby-house . . . but I have seen another baby-house I should like to have to play with. . . . And it's full of the loveliest dolls. I mean, of very interesting dolls" (154). Stowe's

“heap o’ niggers” becomes, in Effie’s designs, a heap of equally de-personalized puppets. Robin Bernstein has made a plausible argument about the role played by black dolls in circulating the notion of the “insensateness” of the black body throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. This belief that the black body is simultaneously impervious to—and almost calling for—pain was naturalized through many other items of material culture, but established itself with peculiar effectiveness through black dolls because, Bernstein claims, their material characteristics made them particularly beatable *and* resistant to rough play.[46] Rollins’s usage of the doll metaphor to indicate the Irish immigrants seems to condemn, along similar lines, the upper-class blindness to the pain of the ethnic poor. Cassie’s strong psychological reaction to the feeling of being a doll for the reform games of the wealthy in fact breaks her spirit more than her economic destitution. According to this logic, accepting help would correspond to accepting a “condition of total visibility” and “insensateness,” which she rejects.[47]

However common to the immigrant experience, the lack of an intimate dimension is insufferable for Cassie to the point that she almost welcomes her “seduction” for its measure of recognition and intimacy. In the new private dimension of established mistress of Wall Street millionaire Richard Harley, Cassie’s paralyzing shame turns into a strangely empowering sense of guilt. Her acceptance of having deliberately committed a wrong affords her a form of agency that rekindles her resentment toward society in the form of vivid revenge plans. At a superficial level, she employs the economic retribution adopted by many women of the higher classes in response to their commodification by their bourgeois marriages and she challenges the man’s finances: “Are not his thousands dribbling into my fingers? What is a pistol-shot . . . to compare with a revenge like mine?” (452). On a deeper level, she embraces that “tangle of gilded sin and sin ungilded” (455)—the toxic relationship between the very rich and the very poor—to inflict what she sees as a fatal wound upon the heart of the bourgeois family. Embodying the worries of Mr. Sinclair and Mr. Selby, who fear the revenge of the slum in the form of “ruined youth and maidens [that] come out into the streets and corrupt our youths and our maidens”

(384), Cassie takes pride in being the intruder that pollutes the pure domestic space of the upper Anglo-American classes. Drawing a parallel between slavery and the exploitation of immigrants in the moral ruin that the oppressors suffer in both situations, O'Brien notes that "the claim that slavery destroyed the moral fiber, not only of slaves but also of white men who exploited and raped them, applies to the privileged men who take advantage of poor Irish immigrant labor and make whores of Irish daughters like Cassie and her sister Josie."[48] Yet Cassie's claim that her revenge against the slumlords is accomplished because contamination is mutual (454) appears as a delusional fantasy rather than a commensurate vendetta, especially given her final condition of kept woman within yet another dollhouse.

Striving for an impossible closure, Rollins devises an imaginative denouement that reconfirms an unsettling geography of responsibility, guilt, and hope. Cassie, "a year later," is presented in the act of modeling as Cleopatra for a painter who is sincerely in love with her. The painter is the brother of Cassie's former lover but he apparently ignores her past. Turning down the painter's marriage proposal to spare him from her own corrupting influence, Cassie reveals not only her guilty past and her being a mother, but also, most significantly, that she has "learned to love" the life of a mistress, with "its excitement, its fascination, its wickedness" (464–66). Becoming another of Rollins's heroines who seeks salvation for her child through separation, Cassie consigns her child to the hands of the American upper classes, asking Harley to raise her daughter as reparation for his caste's social sins. Just as the return to Africa in the conclusion of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* avoids a resolution of the egalitarian impulse crucial to abolitionism, in *Uncle Tom's Tenement*, Cassie's refusal of catharsis and her reliance on a wealthy American male defies the belief that the tenement dwellers can, even when given the means and the intellectual instruments, become a decent class of citizen. The conservatism of Rollins's national design shows through the Progressive-evolutionary fantasy of redress and ever-increasing amelioration. However, seen as a critique of the entrepreneur-speculator who, through his boundless egoism, compromises social balance,[49] the novel plausibly ends on the wish for the rise of a new exemplary hero.

The hero who will provide a proper home for the dispossessed should necessarily stem from the class in power, but ought to be ennobled by an artistic intelligence and a wholesome consciousness. In this perspective, the closing image of the book is an allegorical transfiguration of Cassie as the city of New York, and of Vincent Harley as the class of aristocratic intellectuals who, in Rollins's wishful proposal, can take up collective responsibility for the future of the "wicked city."[50]

FROM BLACK SHADOWS TO BLACK NEIGHBORS

The twelve years separating Cassie's appearance from that of the most successful and unrepentant kept woman of American realism, Caroline Meeber,[51] brought about changes that allowed a potentially unadjusted girl to navigate the moral relativism of the *fin-de-siècle* without succumbing to the weight of her own conscience. But other important changes were simultaneously underway: dark skin, which in Rollins's New York only appeared as a literary reflection, became openly visible in the growing number of African Americans who moved to northern industrial centers. In the decades straddling the turn of the twentieth century, the African American population of New York City nearly tripled and by 1910 it amounted to 100,000 people—most of whom were Southern-born, unskilled, unmarried men.[52] After the completion of the Panama Canal in 1914, there was a significant spike in the number of African Americans migrating to New York, but nonetheless, in 1920 only 2.7 percent of the city's population was black. Despite its relatively small beginnings, the onset of the Black Migration was strongly perceived as a social challenge that supplemented the grievances of metropolitan life with the specter of unclean interracial sexuality.[53] Jane Addams's Chicago was booming too: from 1880 to 1900 the population tripled, bringing not only European immigrants and rural Americans but also Southern African Americans into the city. Yet as some scholars have pointed out,[54] the reluctance even at Hull House to adopt an inclusive stand on the issue of race testifies to "the sway held by the period's conception of black history and personality."[55] Nevertheless, Addams's civil rights activities were conspicuous and

pioneering. She was an early supporter of W. E. B. Du Bois and shared a long-term positive working relationship with Ida B. Wells in support of social justice.[56] Sociologist Mary Jo Deegan even indicates that the earliest work of the Chicago Association for the Advancement of Colored People led by Wells and Addams predated and influenced the NAACP. However, when Addams's analysis of race is discussed, the reviews are often mixed.[57] Far from constituting a comprehensive account of Addams's views on race, my reading will focus on her adoption of a nostalgic abolitionist paradigm that supported, with the authority of history, complete abolition to end the pressing concern of sexual enslavement in America. Whereas Rollins looked back to abolition as a rhetorical arsenal, Addams regarded it as a "state of fantasy" providing the political and moral horizon necessary for the nascent legislative apparatus that should address current social preoccupations. As with Rollins, the serious commitment to a Progressive civic vision came for Addams wrapped in a mentality that punctuated her texts with a dazzling alternation of blindness and insight.

Reformers such as Addams were at their best when they based their theories on experiential practices and engaged in what Shannon Jackson has called "reformance."[58] By using "reformance" to describe the theoretical and methodological model of Hull House, Jackson means to indicate the newly structured performance of space, social interaction, and human behavior that constitutes a process of reform and to challenge "the interpretation that many have given to nineteenth and turn-of-the century reform associations—the move from less significant cultural activities to more important work at the level of policy and legislation."[59] Reformance at Hull House, incomparably more evolved than the detrimental interventions that Rollins blamed on the unprofessional reformers of her times, had a space for reciprocity unknown in America before.[60] Nonetheless, Addams's juxtaposition of abolition and anti-prostitution as well as her enthusiasm for institutional intervention in matters of juvenile unrest reveal how, severed from everyday communal experience, reform fell back on its normative machinery. Although my analysis will address Addams's writings on white slavery rather than her settlement enterprise, her literary performance is

inextricable from the everyday performance of her "experiment in reality." Settling in the midst of the immigrants on Halstead Street, and turning a decayed neighborhood into a thriving if ever-shifting pluralist endeavor, Addams gained insight into the richness of the immigrants' various cultures, as well as their pre-industrial values.[61] She became aware of the plight of the immigrants' daughters—crushed between the cultural constraints that their families brought from old Europe, and the moral and affective vacuum of the demanding urban world. To educate them in American ladyhood she devised programs—such as the many dramatic clubs that operated in the Hull House theater—that provided the opportunity for wholesome entertainment, the acquisition of "uplifted" middle-class behavior, and a way for women to occupy public space without frightening the men, at least not directly. Yet when Addams came to theorize about the girls as actual or potential prostitutes, her lack of faith in their potential as educable, "upliftable," autonomous citizens seems to contradict what Walter Lippmann praised as "the earnest effort Miss Addams has made to treat sex with dignity and joy."[62] In a similar way, the lack of face-to-face recognition in her dealings with her "black neighbors" exposes the cultural and emotional rift that genteel reformers could not bridge, despite a profusion of sincere human sympathy.

Addams's theorizing of prostitution reflected the limitations of the "abolitionist" position on prostitution in America, a particularly popular persuasion also shared by American purity advocates who, with the goal of gender equality, promoted a single, "pure" standard of sexuality for both sexes, preferably enforced by a "maternalist" state.[63] The Chicago Vice Commission was one of the first institutional embodiments of this position, although it was originally formed to improve the effectiveness of the bland regulationist structure that had governed vice in Chicago, rather than to disband it.[64] The thirty men and women appointed to the commission were respected Chicagoans chosen from the ranks of those moderate Progressives who did not overtly oppose the segregation of vice. For this reason it was surprising that their famous 1911 report, *The Social Evil in Chicago*, declared the system of regulation a complete failure, as its opening motto stated: "Constant and Persistent Repression

of Prostitution the Immediate Method: Absolute Annihilation the Ultimate Ideal."[65] The lengthy report was based on the investigations directed by the New York expert George J. Kneeland and characterized female sexual vulnerability in a way typical of many fictional and semi-fictional writings.[66] *The Social Evil in Chicago* was initially received with mixed feelings by a nation that still harbored proponents of state-controlled prostitution. However, the report crystallized an already growing consensus among reformers that vice regulation was unacceptable and inefficient and helped inspire a trend of abolitionist measures that was carried out, for example, by vice commissions in Minneapolis, Philadelphia, and a number of smaller cities under the belief that only the government could successfully act against organized prostitution.[67] That Addams's anti-regulationist convictions were very close to those of the Commission is most clear in two of her numerous books: *The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets* of 1909 and her white slavery book of 1912, *A New Conscience and an Ancient Evil*.

ABOLITION AS STATE OF FANTASY

Large parts of *A New Conscience* had appeared previously in *McClure's Magazine* and were prompted by Addams's readings of the reports of the Juvenile Protective Association of Chicago. These vivid second-hand stories of girls who started working in department stores, factories, and offices only to end up walking the streets convinced Addams of the "incredible social wrong, ancient though it may be" that went under the name of white slavery and compelled her to a "rational consideration [of] the temptations surrounding multitudes of young people."[68] Addams's purported shock reveals how the two decades separating the publication of *Uncle Tom's Tenement* from *A New Conscience* had seen the preoccupation with prostitution grow from one of many urban concerns to a full-blown white slavery hysteria. Resituating the "ancient evil" in the context of modern "community responsibility,"[69] Addams condemns tolerant governmental policies while invoking "more humanity in . . . [America's] dealing with this class of women" and "a little less ruthlessness than that exhibited in the continental cities where

reglementation is relentlessly assumed."[70] The whole book proceeds in a similar vein: the absolute stately duty to prevent the sex trade counterpoints the absolute communal duty to forgive "the woman who has lost all," but the anti-regulationist argument is so overwhelming that it precludes any deeper reflection on what exactly this woman might have lost. Any attempt to understand prostitution from the perspective of the prostitute is undermined by a generalized distrust of her capacity for self-determination, which leaves her story tangled up in the excesses of urban melodrama.[71]

Walter Lippmann was one of the few of Addams's contemporaries to observe this disconnect between the sensational tone of *A New Conscience* and the keen human insight permeating her settlement work, as well as most of her other writings. It was for Lippmann an example of how "sympathy without an explicit philosophy may lead to distorted enthusiasm."[72] Though he praised Addams's work within the community, Lippmann was wary of reformers who supported "forcible attempt[s] to moralize society from the top." There were obviously important differences between these two Progressives: Addams spoke for a large group whose convictions on moral matters were basically traditional, while Lippmann represented a smaller coalition of "modernists" whose reservations about vice reform grew out of new views of sex, marriage, and the family.[73] What Lippmann particularly lamented was the book's "very considerable willingness to gloss over human need in the interest of unanalyzed reform,"[74] a fallacy that would cast *A New Conscience* as pure propaganda. To be sure, Addams personalized the genre through her adoption of the abolitionist tradition and produced an analogy between the Progressive Era and Civil War times that highlighted the racial subtext of much purity discourse.

Addams's treatment of white slavery was more conceptually ambitious than the usual facile parallel between the shocking conditions of black and white slaves. It drew in fact on the campaign for abolition as a mythical time whose role in forging the collective will of American democracy still functioned as a programmatic imperative. Revising Freud's early treatment of fantasy and coupling it to conceptions of the modern state, Jacqueline Rose remarked that "fantasy is always

progressive" in its impulse to enclose the subjects ethically within the vision of a socially viable world. Fantasy, Rose elaborates, grounds "political destinies" in the attempt to "arrest the present" via a constant commerce with the past.[75] In this perspective, abolition constituted the perfect fantasy to be translated into policy because its utopian version, painted in celebratory broad strokes, masked both the inconsistencies of the past and the thorny tensions of the present. Addams recapitulated the historical process of social awakening that led to abolition and projected what she perceived as its patterns of change on the current status of the anti-prostitution campaign. In her vision of abolition, the generation of "the fathers" transcended its callow ideas of racial progress and degeneration to eradicate slavery. Interestingly, slavery is not defined as a structural system of exploitation, but rather as a congenital defect of humanity, or, in her words, a poisonous "tree . . . as old as the race of man."[76] In this universalistic perspective, the old "heroes and martyrs" initiated a journey of progress that the Progressives were called to complete though the elimination of sexual commerce, since, Addams maintains, slavery originated from the same root as prostitution: "the captives of man's earliest warfare."[77] By conflating the origins of slavery and prostitution in a de-historicized primal scene of "warfare," Addams celebrates her "fathers" as the rescuers of war-blighted humanity. This confusion of historical references seriously compromises the author's claims to explain the "contributory causes" of the current phenomenon, but the analogy with abolition seems to service affective rather than logical reasoning. In a sort of secular typology, the history of abolition became the prophecy for the near future: sanitarians, teachers, and lecturers are portrayed as the "scouts and outposts" who announced the final victory in the Civil War while rescue homes for fallen women are cast as a modern underground railroad. In the same way, the battle for the female ballot is compared to the enfranchisement of black people and specific shifts in literature are read as the signals of an incumbent social transformation.

When Addams moves from the historical part of her analogy to the present and considers the cause of contemporary black working women, her racial preconceptions bent insightful observations toward ambivalent

conclusions. Not unlike the Chicago Vice Commission, Addams observes the physical proximity between black neighborhoods and vice districts and bemoans “the large number of colored girls entering a disreputable life.” Looking for causes, the reformer plausibly sketches out an economic context in which excessive rents push black people into ill-famed districts and force working mothers to leave their offspring “in the midst of temptation.”[78] More generally, Addams recognizes that formal racial equality has done little to repair the deep fractures that slavery left in the black community, especially as far as the long-standing destruction of “the negroes’ attempts to family life” is concerned. This call for white Americans to take responsibility for the wounds inflicted on African American familial relations denotes a sound historical consciousness; for this reason, the correlation that Addams draws between her premises and the spreading of prostitution among the black women is dubious:

> The community forces the very people who have confessedly the shortest history of social restraint, into a dangerous proximity with the vice district of the city. This results, as might easily be predicted, in a very large number of colored girls entering a disreputable life. . . . The negroes themselves believe that the basic cause for the high percentage of colored prostitutes is the recent enslavement of their race with its attendant unstable marriage and parental status. . . . It seems all the more unjustifiable that the nation which is responsible for the broken foundations of this family life should carelessly permit the negroes, making their first struggle towards a higher standard of domesticity, to be subjected to the most flagrant temptations which our civilization tolerates.[79]

Addams’s abrupt shift toward environmental influence as the main agent of demoralization undermines her socio-economic analysis. The environment she evokes is hostile and corruptive by nature, rather than being produced by precise historical causes; furthermore, the reason why the vice district is particularly infectious to the black population is their lack of self-control. Given that such shortcomings seem to pertain particularly to the sexual sphere, Addams’s propositions are dangerously close to the ones that generated stereotypes such as the black rapist and

the hypersexual black female. Implicitly endorsing the theory—then rampant—of "Negro underdevelopment," which accounted for the allegedly primitive cultural norms of African Americans, Addams reiterated the problematic logic she had pursued, a decade earlier, in the largely forgotten public exchange on lynching she had with Ida B. Wells. Addams published her 1901 anti-lynching piece, "Respect for the Law," arguing that the heinous practice was "ineffectual, degrading and recessive to the development of society."[80] Ida B. Wells was quick to detect the major flaw in a generally laudable argument, that is to say, conceding that Southern lynch mobs reacted, albeit inhumanely and excessively, to a "peculiar class of crimes committed by one race against the another"—namely the rape of white women.[81] In "Lynching and the Excuse for It," Wells pointed out how Addams accepted the racially inflammatory rationale of lynching and hence perpetuated a dangerous prejudice about the morality of African American men. Reverting to another Progressive passion, namely the use of statistical data, Wells pioneered the use of a statistical argument to defend her race against charges of criminality,[82] and the response to Addams features a long trail of detailed data on lynching. Once again, as Maurice Hamington has also observed, when Addams departed from her pragmatist methodology and theorized on topics that she could not experience in proximity, she was prone to fall back into an evolutionary framework that undercut her serious commitment to "sympathetic knowledge." If Addams's relation to the black community was as tangential as her relation to the world of prostitution, her conflation of prostitution with black slavery compounds a performative disconnection based on inexperience and hinging on sexual prejudice. Consequently, enslavement seems to befall similarly primitive subjects, who are prone to uncontrollable desires and need to be institutionally guided to keep out of trouble. Addams's treatment of white prostitution confirms these assumptions and reveals their imbrication in the Progressives' conception of generational hierarchies.

NURTURE AND RESTRAIN

In *A New Conscience*, Addams concludes the chapter titled “Moral Education and Legal Protection of Children” by reporting how in a rescue home recently opened in Chicago by a white slave traffic committee, “the tender ages of the little girls who were brought there horrified the good clubwomen more than any other aspect of the situation. A number of the little inmates . . . wanted to play with dolls and several of them brought dolls of their own, which they had kept through all their vicissitudes.”[83] The doll-toting baby prostitute was a trope, as we will see in the following chapter, often conjured up to exaggerate the youth, innocence, and lack of direction that supposedly characterized the white slave. Addams’s evocation complements the trope with a general resistance to granting an adult dimension to city girls, epitomizing the generational conflict that underlay prostitution reform. Furthermore, this emphasis on youth encroached on issues of female sexual vulnerability, which were related to racialized notions of the sexual body. Addams’s vision of girlhood is particularly relevant in that it brings together the Progressive discussion of the nascent idea of adolescence in psychology with the phenomena to which the formalization of this concept was a response[84] —prominent among them child labor and sexual consent.

Scouring the papers of The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and of various New York vice commissions, Timothy Gilfoyle has produced, with the advantage of hindsight, a less heart-rending portrait of teenage prostitution at the fin-de-siècle, a practice that seemed to slowly recede in the decades that framed World War I. According to Gilfoyle, many personal accounts gave evidence of Lower East Side teenagers who saw the sale of sex as a routine part of city life, and who engaged in this work from emulation rather than coercion.[85] Quite interestingly, the success of teenage prostitutes in brothels and on the streets led their older competitors to dress up as schoolgirls in an attempt to cater to the new demand. As a matter of fact, many young girls of the working class appeared to view intercourse very differently from their middle-class peers and acknowledged that commercial sex offered tangible benefits that they could not, or would not, renounce.[86] As the cases uncovered by Sharon Wood in her study of sexual politics in Davenport, Iowa, demonstrate, the thin line separating

voluntary engagement in paid sex by sexual exploitation blurred easily when the girls involved were extremely young.[87] While the nonchalant attitude registered by Gilfoyle was only one path in the intricate maze of adduced motivations, it was nonetheless symptomatic of a wide gray zone between structured prostitution and casual, free initiative.

This aspect never enters Addams's narrative, which, like the Chicago Vice Commission's report, arranges numerous testimonies to create an uninterrupted tale of woe and ignorance, but also of misguided vanity, love of pleasure, and a starved imagination. As Beer and Joslin put it, Addams probably "wrote for an audience obsessed with the issue of the untended 'girl' from Europe or rural America imperiled by the seductions of urban life" and her sources, cited without skepticism, seemed to justify this obsession with their purported objectivity.[88] The existence of a powerful class of "procurers," for example, was never doubted even if the "cadet system" was actually quite peripheral, because emphasizing the tale of seduction or narcotization was crucial to manufacturing an unthreatening version of female sexuality for women who proposed an uncanny threat.[89] Contextually, the marginal girl alone in the city, symbolically central to most issues of social change, is also at the core of a socio-economic analysis reminiscent, to a certain extent, of the theories found in *Women and Economics*.[90] In *A New Conscience*, the extreme conditions in the factories, the greed of estate owners, and the deleterious impact of domestic service multiply the spread of vice. At the same time, the unions are stigmatized as ineffective in the efforts to increase wages and to provide a net of social protection for the frequent periods of unemployment. Like Rollins, Addams is particularly sensitive to the plight of immigrant girls and stigmatizes the despotism of immigrant families over their daughters, implying that orphan girls are less at risk than those working to support their parents. All in all, Addams looks at young women with sincere compassion, and concedes that, under the given circumstances, the degree of self-restraint required of them is unrealistic.[91] Nonetheless, she ascribes their fall into temptation to an inferior stage of development. In Addams's evolutionary model, "girls" always appear as urban primitives, doomed to failure whenever they assert their independence as emotional and

sexual beings, while their capacity for political or even personal vision is hardly considered. When they manage to avoid the double burden of familial responsibility and anomie and retain some vital instinct, Addams sees them becoming prey to a restlessness that "drives them into all sorts of obscure expressions"—just as the boys are "driven into gambling and drinking."[92]

A New Conscience offers a number of comments on the nature of self-control, but one particularly deleterious manifestation of its lack is the inclination of city girls toward consumption. Interpreting consumer culture as a new moral challenge, Addams points to the department store as the place where "every possible weakness in a girl is detected and traded upon,"[93] not so much because of the tempting display of fineries that girls covet, but rather because the saleswoman at the counter is made as accessible as the merchandise she sells.[94] Although Addams seems to present prostitution as a by-product of industrial capitalism, the store is particularly villainous for its inefficiency to function as a chaperone.[95] Addams's inability to read the girls' responsiveness to modernity as an instance of personal advancement becomes functional to her reformative motive and confirms an agenda, which, as in the case of the black population, urges "the nation" that has disrupted traditional values to act *in loco parenti*. Considering the lack of self-control as resistant to education, Addams favors constant guidance combined with an extension of local and federal authority as a remedy. In tune with this principle, *A New Conscience* praises the anti-prostitution legislation produced by the *Treaty of Paris* in 1904 and the *Mann Act* of 1910, as anticipated in *The Spirit of Youth*:

> While it may be difficult for the federal authorities to accomplish this protection and will doubtless require an extension of the powers of the Department of Immigration, certainly no one will doubt that it is the business of the city itself to extend much more protection to young girls who so thoughtlessly walk upon its streets. [96]

Behind Addams's penetrating sociological eye, the reader perceives an intellect that stubbornly ignores the capacity for self-government of a

whole layer of “thoughtless” female adolescents. Nowhere does she encourage these girls to organize in working-class movements, nor does she deem them capable of cooperating in her settlement enterprise alongside her college-educated colleagues. Addams’s Progressivism spoke two different languages: the language of sympathy toward the “divine fire of youth” and the language of the “immemorial obligation which rests upon the adults [to] . . . nurture and restrain the youth.”[97] One of most successful initiatives that Hull House set up in the pursuit of this double imperative—“nurture and restrain”—were the dramatic clubs that constituted a milestone in the history of the Little Theater movement. Performance at Hull House was widely practiced through forms of embodiment that involved public events, social dances, festivals, story-telling, and masquerades, but the theatrical process differed from these activities in that it forged an alternative collectivity that “generated unique affective bonds among tentatively formed groups.”[98] As Edith de Nancrede, one long-time performance director at Hull House, wrote to Addams about her drama groups: “No matter how good a time I give them socially, they would drift apart after they are grown up but for the plays.”[99] A safe and sound cosmopolitan community created through an aesthetic practice was thus presented as one of the most efficient antidotes to the dispersion of human capital in the aesthetic and material solicitations of the commercial world. Furthermore, acting provided a behavioral model through which urban children and youth could appease and control the upheavals of their starved imaginations, providing a safety zone “in which life may be lived in efflorescence” but with decorum.[100] The cultivation of an aesthetic and moral sensibility, acquired through “one play a year for ten years,” enhanced the mastery of a deportment considered to be the exterior manifestation of American middle-class domestic abilities and a factor of integration for the children of immigrants.[101]

THE SPIRIT OF ADOLESCENCE, THE BODY OF CHILDHOOD

Addams’s theses on youth and its discontents resonated with the work of prominent scholars of her time. Sociologist William I. Thomas, who

was devoutly committed to the activities and ideas developed at Hull House,[102] produced for example a study of juvenile female waywardness that contained some elaborations of the generational perspective that shaped Addams's vision.[103] Published about a decade after *A New Conscience*, Thomas's *The Unadjusted Girl* expounded a causal analysis for girls' "delinquency" that updated Addams's language but maintained her insights.[104] Thomas's behavioral model indicated the "wish for new experience" and the "wish for response" as the motors of most female deviance, but only in adolescents were these drives considered conducive to delinquency. Thomas implicitly enforced a hierarchy of moral dispensation that placed women over girls and produced a qualitative taxonomy of waywardness. Far from being a prude, the sociologist often appreciated the importance of sexual behavior in adolescents who evinced a vivid sociality and rebelled against oppressive families, but his conclusions were nonetheless twofold. Whereas in mature women resisting the drudgery of marital life sexual restlessness was a symptom of psychic health, in girls it was a sign of disorder, and called for re-educational intervention. As in the case of Addams, Thomas's generally insightful analysis seems to reproduce the nature of his sources: while the case studies concerning underage girls all come from the probation officers of the juvenile courts, and are therefore informed by social workers' alertness for indicators of criminal potential, the stories of married women are drawn from the "letters" section of Jewish newspapers, especially from the *Jewish Daily Forward*, where, under the symbolic protection provided by the impenetrability of Yiddish writing to American eyes, women pour forth their lives in an unrestrained confessional mode.[105]

Addams, for her part, avoided addressing "the wish for recognition" in adult women altogether since, in her view, sexual instincts become thoroughly appeased through the considered choice of a steady companion.[106] As to those cases of juvenile restlessness resistant to all intervention, she philosophically regarded them as fixtures of the "months and years [that] elapse before the individual mate is selected and determined upon, and during the time . . . there is of necessity a great deal of groping and waste."[107] The expression "groping and

waste" echoes G. Stanley Hall's view that adolescence was a period of heightened "storm and stress."[108] Hall initiated the scientific study of puberty; his most influential work in this area, *Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime and Education* (1904) introduced the term adolescence into common usage. Although Addams favored in her work the older and more general word "youth," she was certainly familiar with Hall's work.[109] Hall based his study on the Lamarckian evolutionary ideas that were considered by many thinkers of the early twentieth century a better explanation of evolution than Darwin's theory of natural selection.[110] In this perspective he formulated his theory of recapitulation, that is, the idea that the developmental journey of a single individual "recapitulates" the evolutionary history of humanity. Within this framework, adolescence represented the most recent of man's stages.[111] Adolescents were considered to occupy a privileged position, a liminal standing from which they would leap into a superior evolutionary dimension as soon as they mastered the residual animal impulses of earlier phases and the emotional stress involved in the transition. The romantic belief in the possibilities of youth and the focus on the young as individuals *in fieri* pervade *The Spirit of Youth*, as do references to vestigial primitive instincts. The similar aspects of Addams's thinking probably owe something to Hall; but they also reflect, more generally, the Progressive view of adolescents as inferior adults to be perfected into mature citizens—a view easily susceptible to class- and gender-inflected ideas of autonomy and initiative. What the Progressives would label "groping and waste" often included behaviors that revealed rationally developed female autonomy. In this context, working-class girls' increasingly visible sexual expression challenged conventional ideas of female heterosexuality in ways that most reformers were not ready to interpret as a healthy declaration of independence.

The case has often been made that the reformers' effort to extend to working-class girls the legal status of children served a rhetoric of effective protection, but also a purely middle-class preoccupation that, for Addams in particular, has also been read as an expression of her personal "queasiness over heterosexuality."[112] However, if, in the

context of settlement work, a conservative commitment to protection was balanced by the range of enabling modes in which it was conveyed and by its halo of communal affective stability, the same principle, transposed into the institutional and legal realm, led to the problematic erasure of women's decision-making capacities from the legislation of sexual crimes, and contributed to the curtailing of their civil liberties. Although this risk was actually considered in the final part of *A New Conscience*, it was evaluated as a necessary defense against the "specious and illegitimate theories of freedom" that limited social progress.[113]

Whereas real girls investigated the intersections between sexual identity and respectability following an "illegitimate" ethos of their own, the perspectives of well-meaning reformers and of conservative white slave narratives converged on the forceful infantilization of white women. Targeting sexually active girls in particular, rhetorical infantilization compounded the wayward and the victim into the body of the child. As Connelly suggests, the reduction of the white slave to a ruined child certainly simplified the complexities of urban prostitution and precluded its discussion as a manifestation of adult sexuality.[114] Nevertheless, as Peter Coviello has argued, the appropriation of the image of the child also describes the rise of an eminently American "mode of national belonging that is at once redolent of nineteenth-century sentimentality and responsive to new forms of affective nationality."[115] According to Coviello, contemporary modernity offers "an endlessly reiterated spectacle . . . of children's innocence under threat," a spectacle that circulates "among us [Americans] that . . . reactive horror by which we are confirmed as fellow Americans."[116] An analogous reactive horror bound together the writers and readers of the white slavery tracts, as if the sight of imagined childhood innocence succumbing to alien brutes could give back to Americans the confidence that ineludible changes were eroding.[117] Like most expressions of the captivity genre, the representation of bound women undoubtedly provided the readers with a vicarious pornographic experience. According to this logic, the transformation of women into children is also eloquent with respect to the visualization of unconfessed sexual

fantasies, a connection that seemed to be confirmed by the agitation concerning the age of consent.[118]

The reduction of women to helpless girls was not confined to the printed word. A survey of its sculptural expressions also reveals a similar mechanism underwritten with a subtle racial substratum. Abastenia St. Leger Eberle's sculpture *The White Slave* was among the controversial artworks exhibited at the 1913 Armory Show in New York. The small piece, probably exhibited in plaster, was rapidly prepared in the few weeks preceding the exhibition and was the completion of a composition that the artist had begun four years earlier, but that, as Christina Merriman in *The Survey* assumed, had not been considered appropriate for its time back then.[119] Early 1913, a period in which Addams's *A New Conscience* had been out for a few months, when white slavery tracts and novels were selling in great numbers, and when Broadway was constantly offering white slavery plays, seemed, in fact, the perfect timing to exhibit a sculpture on "the problem of the hour."[120] But Eberle was not seeking instant notoriety: to her the artist was "the specialized eye of society" and had the precise duty to "see for the people—reveal them to themselves and to each other."[121] The sculptor was an active supporter of women's rights and a political artist. She lived in a settlement in New York and declared Jane Addams a great influence on her decision to become a proponent of social readjustment by means of her art.[122] *The Survey*, the magazine of Progressive reform and philanthropy, immediately understood this intent and featured a reproduction of the statue on the May 13 cover. In that issue, the sculpture and Elizabeth Robbins's white slavery novel *My Little Sister* were reviewed together. For weeks the editors of *The Survey* received requests of the reproduction of "the sermon in stone" for educational purposes.[123]

But what was the exact content of the sermon? The small bronze *The White Slave* displays a nude pubescent girl in the hands of a grotesque slave trader. The tension between the aggressive, fully dressed, "decidedly non Anglo-Saxon"[124] man and the forlorn victim was expected to produce some scandal, but the audience's reaction exceeded all initial expectations. The representation of an adult in a suit

holding a naked little girl by the wrists must have touched a sensitive nerve, because criticism against this compositional choice was so strong that Eberle cast a censored copy in which the girl was featured alone. Needless to say, the social message was lost with the bowdlerized statue, as its ambiguous pathos dissipated.[125] If on the one hand the removal of the slave trader deprived the viewers of a reassuring ethnic scapegoat, on the other hand, it also eliminated the unintentional evocation of sexual fantasies focused on childhood but disguised as a plea for purity. What remained unquestioned was the accuracy of Eberle's representation of the "slave."

This fascination with lost innocence and alien "defilers" counts sculptural precedents that go back to the famous *The Greek Slave* by Hiram Powers (c. 1847) and to its almost coeval *The White Captive* by Erastus Dow (c. 1859). By situating these statues in a chronological spectrum that ends with Eberle's *White Slave*, it becomes possible to visualize the gradual diminution in size of the female naked body in representations where the idea of sexual exploitation lurks behind the patent theme of bondage. At the same time, the comparison allows one to observe the repression of visual references to the enslavement of African Americans in the transition from chattel slavery to urban white slavery. Powers's *The Greek Slave* was perhaps the most popular American work of art at mid-century: over one hundred thousand people paid to see it during its 1847–1848 tour around the country and miniature copies of the statue were popular in upper-class homes for the rest of the century.[126] To justify the stark nakedness of the piece, an accompanying pamphlet admonished the public to read the statue as a "Slave [that] has been taken from one of the Greek Islands by the Turks, in the time of the Greek Revolution."[127] Critic Robert Hughes argued that this "sales pitch" was aimed at Puritan sensibilities:[128] cued to behave as if they were in church,[129] the viewers were urged to contemplate the statue's transcendent virtues rather than its alluring figure. Quite peculiarly, the obvious connection between the naked woman in chains and the slave auctions in the South went almost undetected to the point that, even in New Orleans, the artifact was exhibited without prompting any such reference, if not some brief

mention in a few abolitionist newspapers.[130] Arguably, what the fiction of the pamphlet was also disguising was the process of "pornotroping" that, according to Hortense Spillers, involved the captive (black) body during the nineteenth century precisely because of its "sheer physical powerlessness."[131] Yet within the American imaginary, the joint expulsion of sexuality and blackness from the possibilities of meaning allowed *The Greek Slave* to be the object of a pleasure-seeking collective gaze which simultaneously shielded the viewers' consciousness with a tale of national self-suggestion.

Whereas Powers's subject is a fully formed woman, Erastus Dow Palmer produced, shortly thereafter, a younger and "thoroughly American" variation on the theme. His full-length nude portrays a baby-faced female figure whose hands are bound to a tree. The subject has been supposedly snatched from her home by the Indians but, rather than fear, her attitude bespeaks defiance and moral superiority. Palmer's contribution is crucial in that it added the essential ingredient of national character to the figure: by suggesting the backdrop of the American frontier, he connoted the subject as a country girl, an adolescent embodiment of the agrarian myth portrayed as all that is pure, and threatened, in American society. As a conclusion to this parable of rejuvenation, Eberle's slave epitomized the ominous fate of the country girls who ran to the city unattended. The physical bonds are invisible but the distress of the figure is unprecedented: the captive has lost all the traits of adult femininity as well as of defiant youth. Like Addams, Eberle possessed a double consciousness that allowed her to keenly observe and sympathize with the street children populating her New York neighborhood, as expressed in some of her sculptural portraits of playing children; yet it also led her to cast the same children as signifiers of irrational fears that risked obscuring more structural and immediate dangers. In more than one sense the narrative sustaining Eberle's statue represents a regression with respect to the social exposé contained in Rollins's novel, where the women are adults who act out of volition and choice, although unluckily, and where the exploiters are not racialized but, on the contrary, clearly identified with members of genteel society. In this process the gradual substitution of the captive

woman with the captive child resonates with an infantilization of the sexually vulnerable subject, as if the body of the imagined victim/temptress should become younger and weaker to counter the fact that real girls grow up to become adult and strong.

Stowe's characters, which Henry James famously compared to "leaping fish," swam in the undercurrents of social literature and carried, wherever they landed, the pathos of a civic gospel, an invitation to empathy, and the urge to change. At the same time, they also carried the stigma vestigially attached to blackness. Rollins's transference of the plight of light-skinned female slaves into the mold of sexually exploited immigrants brought this duplicitous legacy to those new forms of slavery related to urban industrial capitalism. This transposition, in conjunction with the discussion of prostitution permeating the novel, makes *Uncle Tom's Tenement* a key work in the resignification of white slavery as it came to be understood in Progressive America. The difficult proximity between races in America in Stowe's model resonated with the same essentializing undertones that framed class relationships in the late Gilded Age and cast on immigrant city girls the shadow of underdevelopment, excessive instincts, and moral instability. A conception of waywardness that linked social unadjustment with helplessness went hand in hand with the imperative to protect the young, which was part and parcel of the abolitionist stance on prostitution. Reformers like Addams, who practiced "reformance" by immersing themselves in face-to-face interactions with those who lived on the other side of class privilege, created effective welfare communities where the quotidianity of embodied care built a novel kind of intimacy: the productive and structured performance of private acts of care that transformed the marginal into conscious citizens. This discourse of the public and the private presented perilous intersections that, emerging more often in theory than in practice, nonetheless invoked and justified, through the glorifying lens of old-time abolition, legally based forms of social division that will become more apparent in the next chapter. Perched between the private and the public, shadowed by the protective wing of the reformer and the guilty hand of procurer, "girls"—completely whitened by her helpless innocence—constituted the

battleground of an ongoing conflict, perpetually central and perpetually on the fringes.

NOTES

1. Alice Wellington Rollins, *Uncle Tom's Tenement* (Boston: The William E. Smythe Company, 1888), 3. Hereafter page numbers referring to the novel will be given parenthetically in the text.
2. Robin Bernstein, *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood from Slavery to Civil Rights* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 99.
3. "Captivity" refers here to involuntary confinement to a brothel. Mark T. Connelly, *The Response to Prostitution in the United States* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 115.
4. Mara L. Keire, "The Vice Trust: A Reinterpretation of the White Slavery Scare in the United States," *Journal of Social History* 35, no. 1 (2001): 8.
5. Alice Wellington Rollins (1847–1897) wrote mainly poetry. Among her collections of verse, only *The Ring of Amethyst* (1878) reached the second edition. Other titles are *From Palm to Glacier* (1892), *Little Page Fern* (1895), *The Story of a Ranch* (1885), and *The Three Tetons* (1887). Some of her most famous poems are anthologized in *An American Anthology, 1787–1900*, a collection of poetry edited by Edmund Clarence Stedman in 1900.
6. Kevin J. Hayes, "In Darkest New York," introductory essay to *Maggie. A Girl of the Streets* by Stephen Crane, edited by Kevin J. Hayes (Boston: Bedford, 1999), 106.
7. Colleen C. O'Brien, "Race-ing toward Civilization: Sexual Slavery and Nativism in the Novels of Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins and Alice Wellington Rollins," *Legacy* 20, no. 1 and 2 (2003): 119.
8. Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 9.
9. Lauren Berlant, "Poor Eliza," *American Literature* 70, no. 3 (1998): 636.
10. Rollins's position emphasizes civic responsibility over collectivism, and her articles published in *Forum* clarify her beliefs concerning, for example, private property. Cf. Alice Wellington Rollins, "The Tenement-House Problem," *Forum* 5, April (1888): 213.

11. Alice Wellington Rollins, “The New Uncle Tom’s Cabin,” *Forum* 4, October (1887).
12. Daniel Levine, *Jane Addams and the Liberal Tradition* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1971). See the Introduction for a wider framing of the concept.
13. Berlant, “Poor Eliza,” 640.
14. Ibid.
15. Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790–1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), xi.
16. Laura Hapke, *Girls Who Went Wrong: Prostitutes in American Fiction, 1885–1917* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1989), 29.
17. In writing *The Evil that Men Do*, the well-to-do New Yorker and Columbia graduate Edgar Fawcett recycled the formulaic plot of the seduced country orphan. Shortly after this novel, Fawcett published in the *Arena* “The Woes of the New York Working Girl,” an essay on the causes of prostitution. Ibid., 35–43. See Stephen Crane, *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (New York: Norton, [1896] 1979).
18. Tompkins, *Sensational Designs*, xviii.
19. Sabine Haenni, “Visual and Theatrical Culture, Tenement Fiction, and the Immigrant Subject in Abraham Cahan’s *Yekl*,” *American Literature* 71, no. 3 (1999): 511.
20. Ibid., 508.
21. Quoted in Rebecca Harding Davis, *Bits of Gossip: Writing Cultural Autobiography*, ed. Janice Lasseter Milner and Sharon M. Harris (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2001), 14.
22. Peter Kvidera, “Rewriting the Ghetto,” *American Quarterly* 57, no. 4 (2005): 1131.
23. Jacob A. Riis, *How the Other Half Lives* (New York: Norton, [1890] 2010).
24. Laura Hapke, *Girls Who Went Wrong*, 10.
25. Laura Hapke, “The American Working Girl and the New York Tenement Tale of the 1890s,” *The Journal of American Culture* 15, no. 2 (1992): 43–44.
26. Examples of this genteel labor fiction are John Hay’s *The Breadwinners* (1883); Thomas Bailey Aldrich’s *The Stillwater Tragedy*

(1879); and Clinton Ross's *The Silent Workman* (1886). Laura Jean Libbey (1862–1924) authored about 200 dime-novels, many of which featured a factory girl's quest for Prince Charming. Among the most famous titles are *Daisy Brooks or a Perilous Love* (1883), *Pretty Madcap Dorothy or How She Won a Lover* (1891), *Jolly Sally Pendleton or the Wife Who Was Not a Wife* (1897), and *Kidnapped at the Altar* (1909). See Joyce Shaw Peterson, "Working Girls and Millionaires: The Melodramatic Romances of Laura Jean Libbey," *American Studies* 24, Spring (1983).

27. Berlant, "Poor Eliza," 636.

28. Hapke, *Girls Who Went Wrong*, 9, 45–67.

29. According to Charles Walcutt's classic account of naturalism, the spectacle provided by literary characters completely deprived of agency should ideally prompt the readers to use their freedom and act on society at large. See Charles C. Walcutt, *American Literary Naturalism: A Divided Stream* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1956), 27.

30. Heike Paul, "'Schwarze Sklaven, Weiße Sklaven': The German Reception of Harriet Beecher-Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*" in Heike Paul and Katja Kanzler, eds., *Amerikanische Populärkultur in Deutschland* (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2002), 31.

31. See Carol Wilson and Calvin D. Wilson, "White Slavery: An American Paradox," *Slavery and Abolition* 19, no. 1 (1998).

32. Paul, "'Schwarze Sklaven, Weiße Sklaven,'" 31.

33. Stephen Talty, "'Spooked,'" *Transition* 85 (2000).

34. Werner Sollors, "Immigrants and Other Americans," in *Columbia Literary History of the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 573.

35. In her essay on the "tenement-house problem" Rollins clarifies the behavioristic idea of education she deems appropriate for tenement dwellers: "By education I mean *something more* than the development of intelligence or the cultivation of ideas: I mean the training in habits. . . . Throw all of the English grammars and half of the Latin ones into the ash-barrel, and introduce in their places manual-labor, cooking, and sewing classes, that shall teach the young not only how to do things neatly, but care about doing them neatly." Rollins, "The Tenement-House Problem," 114–15.

36. Benjamin Barr Lindsey (1869–1943), appointed County Judge in Colorado in 1901, established in the same year the Denver Juvenile Court. Within a decade he became the leading proponent and the best-known judge of the juvenile court movement in the United States and internationally. D'Ann Campbell, "Judge Ben Lindsey and the Juvenile Court Movement, 1901–1904," *Journal of the Southwest* 18, no. 1 (1976).
37. See Cecelia Tichi, *Civic Passions: Seven Who Launched Progressive America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2009), 24. See also Riis, *How the Other Half Lives*, 111–20.
38. Richard Sennet, *The Fall of the Public Man* (New York: 1977), 337–40.
39. See Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).
40. Cf. Haenni, "Visual and Theatrical Culture," 511.
41. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, [1958] 1989), 58.
42. Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (London: Penguin, [1952] 1965), 7.
43. Ralph Ellison, "Working Notes for Invisible Man," in John F. Callahan, ed., *The Collected Essays of Ralph Ellison* (New York: The Modern Library, 2003), 343.
44. See Michael J. Duvall, "Processes of Elimination: Progressive Era Hygienic Ideology, Waste, and Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*," *American Studies* 43, no. 3 (2002): 29–56.
45. The novel does not clarify whether Eliza was specifically a wet nurse. Nonetheless, also in the absence of this detail, her having devoted the best of her mothering capabilities to an aristocrat's son recalls both the traditional role which in the South belonged to black nannies and also, metaphorically, Sethe's lament "They stole my milk" in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*.
46. Bernstein, *Racial Innocence*, 69–72.
47. Svetlana Boym, "On Diasporic Intimacy: Ilya Kabakov's Installations and Immigrant Homes," *Critical Inquiry* 24, no. 2 (1998): 505.
48. O'Brien, "Race-ing Towards Civilization," 122–23; Tompkins, *Sensational Designs*.
49. Heinz Ickstadt, "Exploring the Abyss: The Discovery of the Social Underground in Late-Nineteenth-Century American Fiction," in Susanne Rohr and Sabine Sielke, eds., *Faces of Fiction: Essays in American*

Literature and Culture from the Jacksonian Period to Postmodernity (Heidelberg: Winter, 2001), 65–66.
50. "As Cassie knelt at the feet of Vincent Harley, the city of New York kneels to-day at the feet of those who might be her saviors. . . . I have faith—I hope—I believe—that Vincent Harley, as he stooped and lifted Cassie in his arms, said, 'May the Lord in heaven forgive us, Kate! I will save the child!'" (468).
51. Caroline Meeber is the famous heroine in Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, [1900] 1998).
52. Gilbert Osofsky, *Harlem: The Making of a Ghetto* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), 10–17.
53. Kevin Mumford, *Interzones: Black/White Sex Districts in New York and Chicago in the Early Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 100.
54. See Khalil Gibran Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 125–27.
55. Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn, *Black Neighbors: Race and the Limits of Reform in the American Settlement House Movement, 1890–1945* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 10.
56. Bettina Aptheker, *Lynching and Rape: An Exchange of Views* (New York and San Jose: The American Institute for Marxist Studies, 1977), 3–7.
57. Maurice Hamington, "Public Pragmatism: Jane Addams and Ida B. Wells on Lynching," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 19, no. 2 (2005): 167.
58. Shannon Jackson has coined the term "reformance" to give new visibility to the common etymological root shared by the words reform and performance (to bring into being). Shannon Jackson, *Lines of Activity: Performance, Historiography, Hull-House Domesticity* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2000), 8.
59. Ibid., 17.
60. Maurice Hamington, "Jane Addams and a Politics of Embodied Care," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 15, no. 2 (2001): 119.
61. Ickstadt, "Exploring the Abyss," 72.
62. Walter Lippmann, *A Preface to Politics* (New York and London: Mitchell Kennerley, 1914), 150.

63. Kristin Luker, “Sex, Social Hygiene, and the State: The Double-Edged Sword of Social Reform,” *Theory and Society* 27, no. 5 (1998): 602.
64. . Eric Anderson, “Prostitution and Social Justice: Chicago, 1910–15,” *Social Service Review* 48, no. 2 (1974): 206.
65. Ibid., 211.
66. See The Vice Commission of Chicago, *The Social Evil in Chicago* (Chicago: Gunthortp-Warren Printing Company, 1911). Also see Janet Beer and Katherine Joslin, “Diseases of the Body Politic: White Slavery in Jane Addams’ *A New Conscience and an Ancient Evil* and Selected Short Stories by Charlotte Perkins Gilman,” *Journal of American Studies* 33, no. 1 (1999): 5.
67. Anderson, “Prostitution and Social Justice: Chicago, 1910–15,” 214.
68. Jane Addams, *A New Conscience and an Ancient Evil* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1912), x–xi.
69. Ibid., 7.
70. Ibid., 47.
71. Ibid., 217.
72. Lippmann, *A Preface to Politics*, 79. Also see David F. Allen, *An American Heroine: The Life and Legends of Jane Addams* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 183; and Beer and Joslin, “Diseases of the Body Politic,” 3.
73. Anderson, “Prostitution and Social Justice: Chicago, 1910–15,” 221.
74. Lippmann, *A Preface to Politics*.
75. Jacqueline Rose, *States of Fantasy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 5.
76. Addams, *A New Conscience*, 3.
77. Ibid., 4.
78. Ibid., 117.
79. Ibid., 118.
80. Hamington, “Public Pragmatism: Jane Addams and Ida B. Wells on Lynching,” 171.
81. Aptheker, *Lynching and Rape*, 11.
82. Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness*, 60.
83. Addams, *A New Conscience*, 135–36.
84. John Demos and Virginia Demos, “Adolescence in Historical Perspective,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 31, no. 4 (1969): 632.

85. Timothy J. Gilfoyle, *City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790–1920* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1992), 284.
86. Ibid., 288.
87. Wood, *The Freedom of the Streets*, 135.
88. Beer and Joslin, "Diseases of the Body Politic," 5.
89. Addams, *A New Conscience*, 77.
90. The parallel is developed in Beer and Joslin, "Diseases of the Body Politic," 3.
91. Addams, *A New Conscience*, 54. I have written more in detail about this topic in my chapter "No Guidance in Regards to Herself" contained in Michaela Hampf and MaryAnn Snyder-Körber, eds., *Machine: Bodies, Genders and Technologies* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2012).
92. Jane Addams, *The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, [1909] 1972), 15.
93. Addams, *A New Conscience*, 64.
94. Ibid., 65.
95. Ibid., 66.
96. Addams, *The Spirit*, 35.
97. Ibid., 161, 30.
98. Jackson, *Lines of Activity*, 216.
99. . Quoted in ibid., 219.
100. Addams, *The Spirit*, 89.
101. Jackson, *Lines of Activity*, 241.
102. Mary Jo Deegan, *Jane Addams and the Men of the Chicago School, 1892–1920* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1988), 105.
103. William I. Thomas, *The Unadjusted Girl* (Montclair, NJ: Patterson Smith, [1932] 1969).
104. See Carla Cappetti, "Deviant Girls and Dissatisfied Women: A Sociologist's Tale," in Werner Sollers, ed., *The Invention of Ethnicity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 144.
105. To get a taste of the letters see the following collection: Isaac Metzker, ed., *A Bintel Brief: Sixty Years of Letters from the Lower East Side to the Jewish Daily Forward* (New York: Schocken Books, [1971] 1990).
106. Addams, *The Spirit*, 10.
107. Ibid., 11, 26.

108. Demos and Demos, "Adolescence in Historical Perspective," 635. Also see Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, "G. Stanley Hall's Adolescence: Brilliance and Nonsense," *History of Psychology* 9, no. 3 (2006).
109. Allen F. Davis, Introduction to *The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets*, by Jane Addams. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972), xii–xiii.
110. Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, "Adolescent Storm and Stress, Reconsidered," *American Psychologist* 54, no. 5 (1999): 317.
111. As quoted from *Adolescence* in Robert E. Grinder, "The Concept of Adolescence in the Genetic Psychology of G. Stanley Hall," *Child Development* 40, no. 2 (1969): 358.
112. Beer and Joslin, "Diseases of the Body Politic," 3.
113. Addams, *A New Conscience*, 206.
114. Connelly, *The Response to Prostitution*, 127.
115. Peter Coviello, "The Sexual Child; or, This American Life," *Raritan* 27, no. 4 (2008): 152.
116. Ibid., 153.
117. Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 158–93.
118. For a discussion on the Progressive battle for the age of consent as a way of targeting rape and some reflections of the ensuing conception of childhood and adolescence, see Robertson, "Age of Consent Law and the Making of Modern Childhood in New York City, 1886–1921"; Mary Odem, *Delinquent Daughters: Protecting and Policing Adolescent Female Sexuality in the United States, 1885–1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); and Jane E. Larson, "'Even a Worm Will Turn at Last': Rape Reform in Late Nineteenth-Century America," *Yale Journal of Law and the Humanities* 9 (1997).
119. Christina Merriman, "New Bottles for New Wine: The Work of Abastenia St. Leger Eberle," *The Survey*, May 3 (1913).
120. Casteras quotes the article "A Sculptress Who Has Caught the American Rhythm" from *Current Opinion*. See Susan P. Casteras, "Abastenia St. Leger Eberle's 'White Slave,'" *Woman's Art Journal* 7, no. 1 (1986): 35.
121. Cited in Merriman, "New Bottles."
122. Casteras, "Abastenia St. Leger Eberle's 'White Slave,'" 33.
123. Ibid., 34.
124. Connelly, *The Response to Prostitution*, 127.

125. Casteras, “Abastenia St. Leger Eberle’s ‘White Slave,’” 35.
126. As the poet in *The Independent* observes, the American government chose to use Powers’s work as the centerpiece of the nation’s exhibit at the 1851 World’s Fair in the Crystal Palace in London. See *Uncle Tom’s Cabin and American Culture: A Multimedia Archive*, accessed January 31, 2010, http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/sentimnt/grslvhp.html.
127. Ibid.
128. Robert Hughes, *American Visions: The Epic History of Art in America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 216–17.
129. Joy S. Kasson, “Mind in Matter in History: Viewing the Greek Slave,” *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 11, no. 1 (1998): 81.
130. *The National Era* 1847, unsigned. Available at *Uncle Tom’s Cabin and American Culture: A Multimedia Archive*, accessed September 5, 2013, http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/sentimnt/snar01at.html. Outside the United States the pious mystification was ridiculed, as in the British magazine *Punch* with its timely publishing of the statue’s parody in black under the title “The Virginian Slave.”
131. Hortense J. Spillers, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book,” *Diacritics* 17, no. 2 (1987): 67.

Chapter 3

In the Theater of Justice: White Slavery, the Law, and the Color Line

> I feel with you that more than the fate of Belle Moore is involved. As was urged on appeal, it is a question whether it shall become a principle of criminal jurisprudence that it is a legitimate function of the Commonwealth not only to tempt people into committing crime but to cajole and seduce them into it and make the path inviting and attractive.
> —Alexander Karlin, *The New York Times*, 1910

In her autobiography, trailblazing African American performer Ethel Waters noted that "pimps very seldom had troubles with the white girls in their stables." Whereas "the white girls almost always did as they were told," "brown skin whores . . . were the rebellious and independent ones, and showed they had minds and wills of their own."[1]

Born to a teenage rape victim in 1896, Waters avoided the moral perils of the disheveled "Bloody" Eighth Ward in Philadelphia, where she grew up, only because, ironically, the prostitutes for whom she ran errands as a child vigorously "kept her straight" in those tough years.[2] Waters's recollections of the Philadelphia red-light district at the beginning of the twentieth century bespeak sympathy for the sporting girls, whose destiny she had escaped quite by chance and with whom she shared, beyond the color of her skin, an indomitable spirit. Conversely, white prostitutes impressed her as meek and almost servile —more akin to "children" than their feisty darker colleagues. Even though the blues singer and actress would have refrained from calling the white professionals "white slaves," she registered a perception that, regardless of factual substantiation, resonated with the prevailing discursive reduction of the white wayward woman to docile child. Had she asked her "good friend" the boxing champion Jack Johnson whether

he shared this opinion, he would probably have provided quite a different picture of the "minds and wills" of white fast girls, especially since he had famously spent a year in prison for violating the White-Slave Traffic Act.[3]

As white slavery entered the court of law, the "theater of justice"[4] saw numerous New Women brought upon its stage. Even a passing survey of the legalities concerning white slavery shows how the women involved on all sides of the prostitution discourse—those who practiced it, those who organized its practice, and those who fought for its eradication—challenged the social conventions informing the public sphere. Whereas legal representations of white slaves leaned toward an ideal of female vulnerability coupled with childish helplessness, many of the real women actually engaged in prostitution were independent earners. The procuress and the prostitute, as well as the female detective, and even the blackmailer who profited from the female disempowerment imposed by the White-Slave Traffic Act shared a pragmatic approach to the rules and fallacies of the dominant morality. Proceeding from the options and expectations they found before them, in the nooks and crannies that centuries of the double standard had created in society, these women—black and white—operated with "manly" determination and a utilitarian conception of their own interests.

To quote the *New York Times*' gloss of the proceedings of the white slavery cases, the necessities of legal discourse allowed the otherwise "unprintable" matter that "filled the record" to be voiced and transcribed.[5] Left "unprinted" were not only the accounts of racially mixed debauchery to which the newspapers could only allude, but also the recoding of whiteness as purity and blackness as corruption that permeated the white slavery court decisions as well as the early history of the Mann Act. "White slave" and "white slaver" became the floating signifiers that journalists, vice reformers, lawyers, judges, and congressmen used to voice their fears for the fate of a world they saw as threatened by miscegenation and dissolution.

At least on paper, New York City and New York State had enacted strong provisions against discrimination. The original Statute of 1873

guaranteeing “full and equal enjoyment of any accommodation . . . or places of public amusement” was continuously expanded in the subsequent years up to 1909.[6] Yet there was a growing trend among New Yorkers to consider the separation of the races necessary and desirable. According to the journal of the NAACP, by 1913 about a dozen states had debated the inclusion of a series of restrictive measures against black citizens and racial intermarriages in their legislatures.[7] It was in the courtroom, however, where fears of blacks and of miscegenation coalesced with attempts to address the social problems surrounding white slavery. By turning to the trial of Belle Moore, a mulatto woman convicted as a procuress,[8] as well as to that of Jack Johnson, I will explore some deep-seated contradictions shaping the “Progressive” attempts at legal reform and spotlight the wayward women who, in these cases, stepped across the class line, the racial line, and the line between the professional and the criminal.

PERFORMATIVITY AND NORMATIVITY IN THE MOORE CASE

Belle Moore was caught trying to sell two white girls to undercover agents in a sting operation launched by John D. Rockefeller and local district attorney James Bronson Reynolds. The investigation had originated as a response to the muckraking attacks spearheaded by *McClure’s Magazine* with the obvious goal of discrediting Tammany Hall in view of the impending municipal elections. The inflammatory articles, in particular the pieces authored by George Kibbe Turner, exploited the scandalizing potential of the white slave trade by picturing its ruined virgins in tearjerking detail, and implicitly casting Tammany as the greatest procurer.[9] In order to disprove the connection of the New York administration with such repulsive social evil, in January 1910, Tammany supporter Judge Thomas O’Sullivan appointed John D. Rockefeller as foreman of a grand jury that should investigate Turner’s allegations.[10] Despite the efforts and resources poured into the enterprise, no evidence of the traffic could be found. Frustrated at the inconclusiveness of their grand jury, Rockefeller and Reynolds commissioned two undercover operations to substantiate—and strike a blow against—the

white slave trade.[11] They hired George Miller, a former employee of the Anti-Saloon League and the Immigration Commission, and Frances Foster, a college graduate with considerable experience as a social worker in Boston and in New York. Posing as brothel owners, the investigators were able to buy two Jewish girls from a Russian Jewish man,[12] and two white girls from Moore. While the man managed to negotiate a lenient sentence, Moore was found guilty of compulsory prostitution and sentenced to the maximum term. Her appeals to higher courts reconfirmed the first sentence.[13] The trial, permeated with an urgency that exceeded the severity of Moore's crime, revealed the decisive, if dissimulated, compatibility of the defense attorney's narratives with the class-inflected values of the judge and jury. Furthermore, prostitution, as a "victimless crime," left the prosecution without substantial cooperative witnesses or material evidence. Thus, in the trial of Belle Moore, with scant facts and evidence to speak for themselves, the spotlight was on the lawyers' *performance* of their respective accounts of the incident, and their appeals to the social values of their audience, specifically the judge and jury.

J. L. Austin's paradigmatic analysis of performative "speech acts" highlights another peculiarly performative aspect of the courtroom. In court, the practical effects of certain utterances are immediately institutionalized, and the obvious character of courtroom speech as action is present to all involved. Austin famously postulated the difference between "performative" and "constative" (descriptive) speech acts;[14] with this distinction in mind one can suggest that the discourse of white slavery first reaches its truly "performative" stage only in the moment it enters the legal system. Had it evaded the courts and Congress, white slavery might have remained a "constative" Progressive obsession. However, because during a trial even insinuations and fantasies, once voiced, become truly performative, white slavery was written into a hardly amendable legal script. As the examination of the official record demonstrates, the utterances proffered before the tribunals echo common parlance; nonetheless, in their performative suit, they partake of the "force" that enables words to autonomously "do things," unconstrained by the weight of their own meaning.[15]

In the Moore case, the “thing done by words” is the creation of one single criminal. As an important side effect, the exclusion of Belle Moore from the arena of the negotiations of social justice validates the ceremonial ostracism that renews the rules of the pact for those included in the polity. Excluded from the realm of speech, Moore can only be ventriloquized. Her figure as a defendant emerges from many different voices as the projection of various fantasies. Broadly speaking, she appears to be an oddly wayward token of modern feminity: she is cast in turn as the Negro slave trader, the lewd procuress, the reformable fallen woman, the dancing entertainer, and the Bohemian female entrepreneur. In inhabiting and giving meaning to the urban scenarios evoked around her, Moore inadvertently takes the jury on a slumming tour to meet other types of wayward women. With her, the jurors visit the Black and Tan sporting resorts with their mixed couples and queer individuals; they become acquainted with a changing world of white femininity inhabited by consensual prostitutes and women adrift; and they catch a glimpse of middle-class free-spirited ladies such as divorcees, college graduates and professionals.

The disproportionate importance of this backdrop in delineating the criminal action at issue calls for a consideration of the many “dramaturgical” factors at work.[16] For instance, the duplicitous nature of undercover investigation offers a stepping stone for a metatheatrical twist, which defense attorney Alexander Karlin exploits strategically, by turning the classical defense move of discrediting the witness into a more general attempt to blur the distinction between the scripted act of the faux criminals and the criminal intentions behind that act. By exposing the investigators’ performance as simultaneously a dubious masquerade in the service of a misguided state and the contrived act of confidence men, the defense highlights the inextricability of the two dimensions under discussion, that is to say, the production of crime by adjudication—as effect of performative speech acts—and the dramaturgical elements of the trial.

Karlin’s intensive “stage management” eventually founders in the face of illocutionary forces that he cannot manipulate to his purposes. Precisely in virtue of its predictability in the light of prevailing social

norms, the severe sentence that befalls Belle Moore invites a brief exploration of the relation between performativity and normativity.[17] This correlation can be ascribed to the great role played by "restored behavior" in the different levels of the trial. In his well-known definition of "restored behavior" as a recombination of previously lived behaviors, Richard Schechner emphasizes how the "rules of the game"—be they unconscious habits, structured rituals, or codified practices—are usually homogeneous within a culture.[18] Schechner claims that only a dramatic displacement of behavior from a known to an unexpected context can produce an appreciable change in the reception of the "performance" or, in other words, can make a performance transgressive.[19] In this case, Karlin seeks to subvert the *cliché*—widely popularized by white slave literature—that a mulatto woman and former prostitute is quite likely to be trafficking in white women. By presenting Moore as a victim of illegitimate pseudo-legal operations on the part of white middle-class agents, Karlin tries to destabilize this convention, even though the tracks of restored behavior do not allow the jury to be easily thrown off balance, and eventually lead to the confirmation of old beliefs. Overall, although legally ineffective, Karlin's provocation comes forth with vehemence when he interprets as "good faith" a behavior that the court calls a "crime." Developing this argument, he builds up a line of defense based on entrapment, which highlights the collusion between the normative intentions of the reformers and their counter-normative practices, in every respect similar to those they claim to combat.[20]

At least a decade before the Moore case, the private eyes employed by the Committee of Fifteen had inaugurated the practice of entrapping prostitutes when "investigating" supposed violations of the Tenement House Laws.[21] The trial transcripts reveal that, in the 1910s, similar procedures were still in vogue, as was the practice of making "the investigators participants in the very violations they were charged with eliminating."[22] Detectives Miller and Foster, in fact, devoted little effort to gaining a comprehensive overview of the Black and Tans of the Tenderloin,[23] instead pursuing the accomplishment of a criminal transaction "to make a case for the District Attorney" (168). Unlike the socially minded reformers, detectives receiving a commission were

accustomed to participating in the activities of lowlifes so convincingly that they frequently initiated and pursued illegal negotiations. At the same time, they often ignored opportunities to prevent or report crimes that arose in the course of their actions. The novelty of Karlin's strategy consists of the condemnation of this practice as unlawful. Furthermore, he questions the necessity of the whole investigation by intimating that white slavery is a notion more for the feuilletons than for the tribunal. The judge's determination to keep the term "white slavery" virtually unspeakable only reinforces Karlin's insinuation and offers ammunition for his strategy. If the white slave traffic is unmentionable, implies the attorney, then Belle Moore is logically involved in something that is also nonexistent. All residual misdemeanor is therefore attributable only to the investigators' law-breaking influence.

In this perspective, entrapment is invoked as the demonstration that the defendant, left to herself, would never have committed the crime. The question of intent is of primary importance; the attorney strives to separate Moore's intent from the illicit act, the procurement, that cannot be denied. The denunciation of entrapment implies a shift of responsibility from Belle Moore to the investigators and, by implication, to the state itself, which is averring the procedure through its own institutions. Quite interestingly, Karlin depicts an entrapment that reads like a tale of seduction in which Moore is lured out of her "humble existence" by the temptations that the detectives provide:

> She [Moore] is going to tell you that . . . because night after night this woman leading an humble existence suddenly found in her path George Miller and Frances Foster lavish with money; they took her night after night to various sporting places, that they had dined and wined her that they took her around riding in taxi cabs, and, because of this influence, and not because of any criminal intent, she is going to tell you that she did some act that the State here is trying to make out to be a crime. (233)

Stylistically, Karlin draws on the same genre that featured the black brothel maid, but he pictures Moore in the role that tradition assigned to the naïve white girl. He lingers on Moore's vulnerability to urban

luxuries and he emphasizes her disorientation; to absolve an immigrant or country girl inveigled into acts of dishonor these were usually sufficient excuses. Stopping short of enriching his picture with a promise of marriage—the cadet's trademark illusion—Karlin nonetheless refers to the occurrence of sexual intercourse between Moore and Miller, thus completing the trajectory of his seduction narrative.

Two important implications need to be extracted from the attorney's strategy. The first concerns the general effectiveness of the seduction story and, in this case, its failure. The factor that prevents Belle Moore from enjoying the benefits of fictional victimization is obviously her race; the hysteria around white slavery, far from making society more sensitive to the sexual vulnerability of all women, seems to have magnified the conflation of sexual and racial purity.[24] The two experienced prostitutes that Moore has procured sit on the witness stand, flashy and confident, comfortable with declaring their adult age and occupation. Obviously unable to inspire pity in the jury, they nonetheless sail through the trial uncriticized for their career choice. Moore, on the contrary, despite the rough experiences her testimony reveals,[25] is always held fully accountable for her own immorality, as if honesty—good faith or gullibility, as the case may be—were incompatible with her status as a colored woman. Even Karlin reassures the jury of his understanding of dominant social values, often referring to Moore's morals as being loose and conceding that "she has not lived that pure life that we would like any of our women to live" (289). The content of this declaration is not as telling as the grammar that qualifies it, where the pronoun "we" enables the attorney to include himself in the homosocial circle comprising the jurors, and designating the whole group—through the possessive "our"—as legitimate proprietors of pure, that is white, women. Karlin's "we" marks his belonging to a dominant racialized community with the power to exclude the defendant from the concept of moral integrity. Exercising this power, the court disallows the possibility of her having been deceived and rules that "the idea of carrying out the criminal transaction in question originated in the brain of Belle Moore" (285).

The second important implication of Karlin's strategy arises from the critical interpretation of the notion of state that occurs between the lines of his lengthy cross-examinations. In one of his tirades, Karlin explicitly contends that "the State did solicit and it did persuade or tempt the defendant" (294) and that in the whole story "anything criminal . . . was brought about through the agency of the State." This language suggests less an indictment of the impersonators *per se* than a substantial questioning of the regulatory practices implemented under the label of "reform." Karlin challenges the shady collusion of private good-government activists with the official administration of justice. In this context, his attempt to call for a mistrial (108) corresponds to an attack on the legitimacy of these reformers' public ambitions.[26] Thus, his contentious questions—such as "Is it appropriate for a college graduate to be there?" or "Is it appropriate for a married man to do so?"—express serious qualms cloaked in rhetorical platitudes. In particular, they question the legitimacy of the Progressive interest in the mandatory regulation of the private sphere, a tendency that gained great force when the pious vice societies of the previous decades were replaced by the committees of notables at the turn of the century.[27] Reform-minded interest groups, such as that represented by the Rockefeller grand jury, revealed an overt desire to compete with the state in the regulation of the public sphere through the imposition of moral standards. By drawing on Beatrice Hibou's treatment of the privatization of the state, historian Jennifer Fronc concludes that these organizations were successful in their endeavor, since "even though they were not official parts of the government qua government, [they] had made themselves part of the state by the period of World War I."[28]

In this perspective, white slavery offered a propitious battlefield for the struggle in which private constituencies claimed full participation in the state through access to legislative power, both to serve political ends and to express a critique of society. Uninterested in practices of embodied care, these new civic reformers used to their advantage an awareness of the importance accorded to custom and judicial precedent in a common law system. History had proven that, by influencing a few meaningful court decisions, one could effectively submit society to

arbitrary guidelines.[29] Pursuing this efficient way to shape social behavior entailed branding as crimes those practices that were found deplorable. Karlin points out that, in doing so, the legal machine is activated precisely by the performance of the contested deed. In questioning the reformers' deepest motives (135), the attorney also seeks to dismiss both the detectives and their patrons from the company of righteous reformers, notwithstanding his own desire for the restoration, if not the enforcement, of conservative standards. Karlin seems to be yearning for a higher actor, an almost disembodied and utopian idea of the state, a perfect organism that is also capable of compassion. In this respect, Karlin is the ultimate Progressive: someone who, as Robert Wiebe would have it, shares the national habit, in vogue at the end of the nineteenth century, of attributing omnipotence to abstractions and thus prematurely reconciling the violent contradictions between a familiar set of values and "the strange world beyond."[30]

RESIDUAL JUSTICE AND SEXUAL COMMODITIES

Since the socio-historical circumstances behind the legal proceedings play such a paramount role, the Moore case is "an event that lends itself to narrative representation";[31] at the same time, in strictly abiding by the rules of the legal genre, it elevates the exact nature of the felony being contested to a crucial role. Since the legal record reveals the mandated exclusion of some important elements from the core of the trial—most notably any clear mention of the white slave traffic—we are faced with compelling omissions, which highlight the irreducibly derivative nature of justice. Wai Chee Dimock reminds us that justice emerges as a concept that "etymologically as well as historically . . . [is] given primacy only under the rule of law, only with the legal mediation of human relations."[32] Since justice is, as she argues, a "virtue" defined by a porous language whose central premise is "commensurability," we must necessarily take into account the category of residues, namely "residues unsubsumed and unresolved by any order of the commensurate, residues that introduce a lingering question . . . into any program of justice."[33] Pondering the elements "measured" in the

decision requires that we delve into the underlying mechanisms of adequation. The trial opens with a clear description of the contested allegation that is worth reporting at length:

> [Belle Moore] feloniously did procure and place in the charge of one George A. Miller two certain women, one Alice Milton and one Belle Woods, with the consent of the said two women, and each of them, for immoral purpose . . . that said George A. Miller should shortly thereafter . . . procure each of them to enter and become inmate of a certain house of prostitution . . . against the form of the statute in such case made and provided, and against the peace of the people of the State of New York. (4)

The transcripts end with a paragraph that is virtually the same as this opening passage, the only meaningful addition being a definition of white slavery (290)—a crime of which Moore is declared not guilty—and the mention of money Moore received "in the belief that he [Miller] was paying . . . for procuring" the girls (291). The wording evinces that the object of commensurability, namely the violation against which a punitive compensation is demanded, is the successful completion of an economic transaction. The decision is in tune with Belle Moore's self-perception: she seems to consider herself primarily a businesswoman and acts accordingly. Even through the silence of the sources, Moore's irritation reaches the reader undeflected when she bemoans not having succeeded in her line of work. Although frustrated, she still makes a point of showing Miller some meager signs of conspicuous consumption, demonstrating her potential as a businesswoman, as if to prove that she has not been idle, but simply lacking "some [business?] sense." In the game of contingent identities, Moore seems to favor the role of the entrepreneuse and embraces the mechanics of the market as the backbone of her "work ethics." The only aspect that Moore has miscalculated is the ownership of the stock in which she trades.

In her more general discussion of consent and sexual rights, Pamela Haag points out how one of white slavery's innovations, both popularly and juridically, "was to identify the impersonal, economic association in sexual commerce . . . as its primary violence, the thing that defined and

was synonymous with the offence."[34] If we agree with Haag that Progressivism could be seen as "a problem of contract, an attempt to separate legitimate from illegitimate forms and conditions of expropriation through reconceptualization of public responsibility and freedom,"[35] then, in this case, procurement emerges as an illegitimate expropriation of one's right to autonomously enter a house of prostitution. Hence, Karlin's attempt to shift the responsibility for the procurement onto the investigators amounts to accepting and confirming this definition of the crime, pointing only to a different perpetrator: "I am trying to show that this witness [Miller] and not this defendant did the procuring on that night" (86), Karlin explains. Since the ladies' consent is irrelevant to the indictment as well as to the verdict, it is not from them that a right was stolen. The proprietorial mode underpinning the decision, a vestige of the traditional "seduction laws," suggests that the "victim" dispossessed of the right attached to female sexual capital is a generalized old-order father figure, in this case represented by the state. As Margit Stange argues in her study of white slavery literature, "in the booming market economy of the early twentieth century, women constituted a form of private property acquired through the market."[36] In the rhetoric of the American white slavery discourse, fair access to the exchange value of the white slave becomes the interest of the state, where the state is the sum of all those male nationals, as implied by Karlin with his highly suggestive "we" (189). Prostitutes—even adult and willing ones—are gathered in a daughterly category that any man of a certain "fatherly" status can claim as his "own."

In the course of the case we are also reminded of the specific traits defining this valuable feminine commodity; the law reveals itself, as Scott Herring suggests, as the "complementary medium of sexual taxonomy."[37] In fact, when the detectives define their arrangement with Moore, they give precise requirements for the girls they will purportedly employ: "*I don't want colored girls*; I want white girls; girls weighing *less than one hundred pounds*, not more than one hundred and ten at the most; must be naturally good looking" (9); and again "if she could procure me a *girl that had never been touched*, I would like to have her. . . . I said I did not want a girl that showed *any stain of colored blood*,

because I was *afraid* to put her in my house with white girls" (143) (my emphasis). This testimony supplements the imaginary of the white slavery narrative with a distinct racial argument, one that most white slavery fiction left hidden between the lines. The daughters of the nation, whose exchange value is requisitioned by the father-state, are determined by the "one drop rule" of racial purity.[38] Conversely, colored prostitutes cannot even be imagined to share the same physical space with white ones, in spite of the soaring occurrence of Black and Tan resorts. In Foster's account, proximity generates unmanageable anxieties for which segregation is invoked as a necessary corrective. The hierarchy of values qualifying good daughterly merchandise goes hand in hand with the definition of the proper age, a requirement disturbingly related to the notion of beauty. On some occasions the investigators specify that the girls have to be "under eighteen," but in more frequent remarks youth is equated with aesthetic canons rather than with birth certificates. The visual politics of beauty favor the physical appearance of miniature women, for a "well built" girl under one hundred pounds must be either petite, or so slender that her sexual attributes suggest pre-adolescence rather than womanhood. This request adumbrates the ephebic female body of a prepubescent naked girl—as in Eberle's sculpture *The White Slave*—and bespeaks, once again, the disturbing correlation between an idealization of female identity and its crippling infantilization.

The necessary construction of innocence as the ideological underpinning of the entire judicial action operates at an eminently rhetorical level. The request for virginal girls is only mentioned once, in passing, and is dismissed almost the moment it is raised, screened behind an appeal to an urban myth. Nevertheless, in the rest of the reported conversations, the girls are referred to so often as "babies" and "kids" that Karlin feels obliged to expose the partiality of such language as well as to inquire about the reasons for the weight limit (78). The "necessity" is urgent, since, despite the expectations created by the grand jury, no real "baby" appears in court. Prior to the trial, District Attorney Reynolds had insistently described Alice Milton and Belle Woods as frightened, teddy-bear-toting children.[39] Once on the stand,

however, Alice Milton "confessed to 23 and looked the part." Quite apropos, the *New York Times* appropriates Stowe's cast of characters to expose the hollow theatricality of such forcefully staged purity. With subtle irony, Milton is likened to "the barn-storming Little Eva," that is, to a cheap cliché of the whiteness-innocence dyad, irremediably devalued by its endless repetition.[40] Belle Woods, as we learn from the transcripts, even had a (childless) marriage behind her. Alongside the metaphorical girl-child, a fictional one enters the case proceedings from the grand jury's fabrications: her name is Helen Hastings and she is an eleven-year-old girl whose disappearance has been investigated by the police. D.A. Reynolds had claimed that Moore was hiding the girl, but he dropped this unsustainable allegation before the trial. Miller, however, clung to it, testifying that he was even offered the child for the night.[41] The ambivalent imaginary of Eberle's sculpture is reproduced here with a difference: instead of the Jewish-looking pimp auctioning the naked girl, the transaction is directed by an acrid-faced mulatta.[42] Although this part of the story is quickly dismissed as uncorroborated, its impact succeeds in neutralizing any favorable impressions of Moore that might have formed in the jury or in the public opinion.

This likelihood is related to the circulation of literary types that contradicted the erotic image of the "quadroon" perpetuated as a lewd inversion of the Victorian woman through much postbellum literature.[43] Abolitionist literature instructed the public to view the mulatta not as the despicable fruit of miscegenation and the propagator of corruption but rather as the colored sexual victim of a white master. Cued to follow this narrative, the *New York Times* for example reported Moore as having "an appearance of great intelligence . . . not unsuggestive of Cassie in 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.'"[44] Yet in the absence of slaveholders in their role as quintessential perpetrators, Moore has very few possibilities of being perceived as a victim even though, without a real white child to rescue, the court foregoes the narrative of threatened innocence. The little black girl mentioned by Miller as part of the brothel household meets in fact the complete indifference of the court, as if blackness had the power to disconnect childhood from innocence and consequently from the need for protection, as Robin Bernstein has

demonstrated in her book on American childhood, *Racial Innocence*.[45] What is still under threat is the "peace of the citizens of New York"—and that seems shaken only by the "fear" of interracial relations. The court thus dutifully seeks to protect citizens from potential racial trespassers or, in pragmatic terms, to protect whiteness through segregation. These preoccupations encroach on the "residues of justice," the zone where, once the nature of the illegal transaction is established, the lingering questions resisting adjudication reside and persist.

UNBECOMING OCCUPATIONS

The Jim Crow South made of its pure white women a badge of honor and of their sexual safety a mystifying imperative that justified the most heinous of crimes. While this is common knowledge, the role of the urban North in shaping views of race, legality, and segregation through the endorsement of paradigms of pure womanhood is not as well documented. The Moore case, viewed against the backdrop of the campaign waged by the Committee of Fourteen against the egalitarian politics of the city and State of New York, is a case in point. William S. Bennett, congressman and member of the Committee of Fourteen, explained to his fellow committee members that "if it is a colored place in which white people where not admitted at all," then it "would seem to me that there is no chance for trouble."[46] The "chance for trouble" is the immoral outcome of racial mixing. In this respect, what makes Belle Moore peculiarly guilty is her lack of cooperation in the maintenance of the color line. Congressman Bennett's words reveal the general intention of transferring onto African Americans the responsibility for "voluntary segregation," a strategy that, given the impossibility of dissuading white New Yorkers from the charms of the Black and Tans, seemed to be the only viable option. Whereas criticism of this line of thought was raised by W. E. B. Du Bois, among others,[47] the Committee, indifferent to dissent, sought instead men of "the Booker T. Washington type" to assist them in the achievement of their goal. This re-segregational tendency also illuminates the pressures shaping a certain understanding of femininity, both black and white, in the context of public entertainment and the racial code that regulated it. Once again, Karlin's attitude likely

reflects that of the jury, and especially the idea that a "good" Negro should know his place. Karlin's line of argument synthesizes matters of surveillance, self-discipline, and social control in an attempt to tackle two complementary issues. On the one hand, Karlin emphasizes how both black men and women generally accepted and endorsed racial segregation, thus complying with the duty to protect whiteness, at least as long as they could withstand the enticements of loose white males. On the other hand, he maligns the white female investigators—Mrs. Foster and Miss Jackson—by exposing how these two models of modern femininity show little regard for their own respectability, especially by disregarding the color line. The reproach of their racial conduct is elaborated through a harsh critique of their status as working women, and is expressed through Karlin's refusal to acknowledge certain requirements of their profession or, more simply, the normal behaviors of many self-supporting women.

Amy Jackson was the British-born thirty-year-old assistant who participated in the investigation by posing as Foster's maid. At the time of the trial she had already been in the service of District Attorney Reynolds for four years, but Karlin goes to great lengths to excavate her professional past from the very moment she entered the United States a decade earlier. Ignoring Jackson's steady jobs of the last five years, the counsel emphasizes, with obvious intent, her first occupation as a seamstress. That this and other details are elicited only in order to sabotage Jackson's integrity becomes clear when Karlin uses her early profession as a code for prostitute. For a woman of superior upbringing the syllogism would not flow as easily; thus Karlin's manipulation of Frances Foster's image is, interestingly, a more demanding effort. As a professional, Frances Foster unites two female figures that had been on the social scene since the late 1880s: the undercover lady detective and the "embedded" reformer. Already in 1887, the publication of Nellie Bly's *Ten Days in a Mad-House* in Joseph Pulitzer's *World* significantly inflected the practice of undercover investigation in terms of gender. Bly's widely acclaimed account of her sojourn in a New York asylum set standards of veracity for the representation of the lowlife that were repeatedly imitated. From then on, the practice of impersonation for investigative

purposes quickly grew in popularity among women.[48] The female philanthropic slummer was another well-known type, often looked at with suspicion, since charity slumming was believed to divert women from "the self-sacrifice of traditional reproductive womanhood in favor of the selfish pursuit of pleasure and self-display."[49] To some charity workers, the thrill of perusing the urban labyrinth certainly constituted the greatest charm of their mission; however, the significance of Frances Foster's role undoubtedly exceeds what her contemporary Lawrence Burt called "women's innate love for the exotic."[50]

Foster represents a new generation of women that resisted the facile categorization of urban femininity and participated in New Womanhood with a particularly complex style.[51] Although she successfully posed as a West Coast brothel owner and as Miller's wife for the purposes of the investigation, this fictional persona could not be further from the thirty-two-year-old that the newspapers portrayed as an elegant lady in glasses with a deep-toned, vibrant voice.[52] Karlin's questions to Foster are calibrated to present the all-male jury with a woman whose principal achievement has been a systematic demotion of domesticity for the sake of other ambitions. We learn that Foster devoted her youth to obtaining a degree from Radcliffe College; that, in the early years of her marriage, she busied herself with charity work rather than with motherhood; and that, in her adulthood, she has become completely estranged from her husband, a lawyer. Moreover, Karlin does not fail to stress that she engages comfortably in undercover work, which leads her to associate with colored people in disreputable venues.[53] As Brian Donovan observes, Foster's New Woman features become the general target of Karlin's scorn, but the element in her deportment that the attorney finds particularly disturbing is the self-assurance with which she undertakes her profession, almost upstaging the male detective with her ability to exploit certain feminine ruses. Whereas female reformers were usually held as role models of honesty and restraint, female detectives often used their charms to entrap lascivious males. Foster does none of this. In her undercover performance, femininity becomes the empty simulacrum of transracial sisterhood meant to create a deceptive social bond. In other words,

Foster wields gender solidarity to lower the guard that racial difference would keep high: only by endearing herself to Moore as an equal, in business *and* in gender, could she obtain the dangerous secrets and services that would eventually bring the socially inferior Moore before the court.

In an article describing the famous undercover investigation of the integrity of salesgirls at Macy's Department Store in 1913, Val Marie Johnson highlights how the female detective became crucial to moral surveillance and how her professional activity consisted chiefly of ruthless prying into working girls' intimate lives.[54] Foster undeniably participates in this very unsisterly New Womanhood and embroils herself in a daring "confidence game," in which the energies set adrift are particularly ambiguous. Karlin wavers uneasily among the sexual ambivalences in the dynamics between Foster and Moore, yearning to use them for his argument, but failing to grasp them completely. Foster is disturbingly mannish, in the sense that she is the emotional seducer. She is the temptress winning the mulatto over with "hoodwinking language," while Miller merely "[breaks] the ice" for her (194); she is the "gracious" (196), though false, friend who calls Moore "dear Belle" in her letters (152–76) and "good old sport" (153) in person; finally, she is the one who ostensibly promises to "treat Moore white," thereby offering economic as well as social advancement in one single, tantalizing offer.

This active strategy of seduction destabilizes the dominant understanding of same-sex attraction—or, at least, questions the principles formulated in other racially mixed environments subject to moral surveillance. This was the case, for example, of the 1913 investigation addressing interracial romances at Bedford Female Reformatory in Albany, New York.[55] The reformatory's superintendent cherished the belief that the segregation of inmates by color principle did not improve their moral conditions. Opposing this claim, the State Board of Charity purported that "most undesirable [same] sex relations [grew] out of the . . . mingling of the two races."[56] Psychologist Margaret Otis explained same-sex desire by equating black women's darker skin with virility and described such captive relationships as "racialized sexual inversions."[57] In this regard, Estelle Freedman observes that the

construction of white lesbianism as displaced heterosexuality[58] underscores how threatening the notion of a mannish white woman was. In this light, Foster's performance of a white woman who lures a black woman into intimacy and crime understandably raises unsettling fears.[59]

Karlin's enterprise of persuasion has left none of the possible demeaning nuances of Foster's behavior untouched: antidomesticity, the "dishonoring" of a college degree, drinking habits, and racial carelessness all feature prominently in his innuendos. Yet only at the end of his cross-examination, like an uneasy afterthought, does he mention Foster's most unnatural trait: namely the fact that she is not—not in the least bit—compassionate:

> Karlin: Are you at all *interested* in what happens to Belle Moore?
> Objected to. Sustained. Exception.
> Karlin: Do you *feel* that because you spent a large amount of money in the prosecution of your work [you have] any interest in having this defendant confined behind the bars at the Auburn prison. (166–67 my emphasis)

Foster is obviously not "interested" and, even worse, she does not "feel." Her betrayal of her gender lies in her neglecting these obligations—"to feel and feel right," as Beecher Stowe would put it—which should be the seal of womanhood. In this case these features are traded for aseptic professionalism and the unflappable cool that allows Foster to sidestep Karlin's traps and adamantly refuse to answer the questions that she does not consider "of any benefit to the case" (201).[60] Foster gives off an anti-communal sense of professional independence and shows no regret for it. By valuing her professional comportment more than her sex should allow, Foster becomes a representative of a disquieting sort of New Woman: the detached, emotionless virago who, following a logic of homeopathic vengeance, accesses the male social sphere carrying the weapons of virile professionalism.

MANNING THE WHITE-SLAVE TRAFFIC ACT

In spite of the guilty verdict, the Moore case was considered, as a *New York Times* editorial stated, a laborious act put on by "Ill-Chosen Agents of Reform" who *created* "the criminality they had been sent out to find."[61] Given the racial undercurrents of the decision, the misled reformers also contributed to the criminalization of blackness that Khalil Gibran Muhammad has traced as crucial to "the making of modern America."[62] The Progressive Era, Muhammad suggests, was the time in which the idea of black criminality, shaped through the statistical and juridical apparatus developed in the liberal North, became, not only "a tool to measure black fitness for citizenship," but also "a tool to shield . . . white Americans from the charge of racism."[63] For all the journalistic criticism that criminogenic control techniques were incompatible with the reformative apparatus, such techniques grew increasingly prevalent, to the detriment of the civic status of blackness but also of womanhood. A legalistic manipulation of the notion of female consent was central to this process and, with the White-Slave Traffic Act, it gained great momentum. The act—quickly named after its sponsor, Representative James R. Mann of Illinois—was written, debated, and enacted by Congress at precisely the same time that the Rockefeller grand jury was conferring; it was signed into law by President Taft just one month after the Belle Moore decision.[64] A legal milestone of the Progressive Era, the Mann Act represents the durable legacy of a period when nativist sentiment, fear of miscegenation, and mounting anxieties around the emergence of the New Woman coalesced into a law that continued to produce sexual criminals until the 1980s.[65] For successive generations, the Mann Act came to symbolize the idea of white slavery, and its ratification stimulated a revival of white slavery fiction. However, its genesis was also marked by a certain hysteria, which played an important role in Congress at the time of the bill's approval, allowing traditional fears of excessive federal interference to be superseded by sexual panic.

Before the Mann Act, the federal government had often included prostitution as a component of migration policy. The first federal Immigration Law, the Page Act of 1875, made it illegal for foreign women to practice prostitution and severely sanctioned their "importers."[66] In

1903 and 1907 the scope of this provision was enlarged to criminalize anyone who, even unknowingly, cooperated with the employment of foreigners as prostitutes. In a subsequent amendment the definition of the "incriminating activity" was made vaguer and simply labeled as any employment having an "immoral purpose." In managing to shift the language of the law from "prostitution" to "sexual immorality," the proponents of the federal policing of white slavery thus invited the intrusion of the state into matters of private behavior. In the presence of only rare judicial decisions to controvert this tendency,[67] and thanks to the work of certain zealous commissions, the ground was being prepared for a definitive expansion of federal power over the jurisdiction of the states—as well as into citizens' intimate lives. J. D. Rockefeller, for example, after the expiry of his grand jury, organized the influential Bureau of Social Hygiene and hired George J. Kneeland to prepare his famous report *Commercialized Prostitution in New York City*, which was published in 1913. Kneeland's work was preceded by the probing efforts of two other influential delegations: the Dillingham Immigration Commission, which reported in 1909, and the Chicago Vice Commission, whose findings were published in 1911.[68] The Dillingham report, an authoritative forty-two-volume study of virtually every aspect of immigration, was probably the account with the most inconsistencies, permeated as it was with the eugenic belief in the inferiority of new immigrants.[69] Building on the section of the report entitled "Importation and Harboring of Women for Immoral Purpose," the White-Slave Traffic Act expanded the punitive measures against foreign women involved in the sex trade and made the criminal offence dependent on *any* association with "resorts habitually frequented by prostitutes."[70] In its final draft, the Mann Act included an entire section designed to integrate immigration law with the regulation of prostitution by targeting the importers of women. Even though the act's concern with the transatlantic traffic appears to be a bureaucratic acknowledgment of the obligations imposed by the international anti-prostitution treaty of 1904 which Roosevelt proclaimed in 1908, there ensued cogent effects which were primarily felt within national boundaries. The problem with prostitution seemed to embody a certain longing for the preservation of

an all-American female purity[71] and the remaining sections of the Mann Act directly addressed this concern. Its most famous clause made it a felony to knowingly transport women across state lines for immoral purposes, with or without their consent. While shifting the preoccupation with regulating women's sexuality exclusively within national borders, the Mann Act also made no provision for the distinction between a "white slave" and a "hardened prostitute."[72] As a consequence of the irrelevance accorded to the will or intent of the woman being transported, the presumably male trafficker remained the only party exerting some volition, and therefore the only party criminally liable. According to these androcentric dynamics, sexually active women who traveled between states were either old-time victims or, in certain circumstances, blackmailers—a possibility encouraged by the virtual immunity the act guaranteed.

Pamela Haag's work on sexual consent in the light of American liberalism illuminates some of the peculiar functions fulfilled by the Mann Act. For one thing, it moved the legal regulation of sexual promises from the domain of individuals to the domain of things: as a consequence of the reduction of women to commodities, both coercion and complicity disappeared from the legal discourse. This maneuver removed the dilemma of having to relinquish the ideal, inexorably eroded by reality, that white women were inalienably virtuous. The tension between wishful idealism and reality had afflicted legislators for a long time and had found its expression in the categorization of seduction and breach-of-promise as criminal offenses against "the people," a taxonomy rooted in the rhetoric of public purity and criminal liability to the commonweal.[73] By the end of the nineteenth century this principle had begun to weaken, as the legal system increasingly came to understand sexual consent as associated with economic self-interest. This liberal conception of the "private person" as a freely contracting agent became so influential as to supersede, or at least compete with, the concept of the woman as a disembodied receptacle of virtue. Within this framework, consent was minted into a coin of exchange: a coin that a woman should concede as the seal and reward for a marriage proposal. The promise of marriage, although equated to

the price paid for obtaining sexual interaction, constituted a bilateral contract validated in the very moment of intercourse. The risks inherent in the acceptance of this contractual model were connected with the relative freedom accorded to the female party. As soon as women were officially endowed, within the marital marketplace, with the power to contract their own sexual availability against a tangible value (matrimony), the specter of the possible misuses of such agency arose, and judges were quick to define the risks of "extortion" and "revenge" as early as in 1873.[74] If, on the one hand, the idea of self-interest in the disposal of one's virginity instilled the emergence of American sexual rights with suspicion, on the other hand it granted women decisional power over their bodies as "property." By the time of the Moore case this decisional power had been neutralized and the prelapsarian fantasy of female innocence was rejuvenated by the impossibility of ascertaining the woman's intention. To paraphrase Carol Pateman, the reduction of consent to meaninglessness removed the standard embarrassment that would normally have afflicted any serious analysis of who was allowed to consent and how.[75]

The legal malleability afforded by shifting the adjudication of female sexuality to "the law of things"[76] provided Representative Mann with a convenient loophole. When he treated white slavery as a form of interstate commerce, he used, in this new context, the previous experience he had accumulated in extending the constitutional commerce clause to a wide range of interstate transactions. To Mann, the regulations protecting the purity of food provided the blueprint for his protection of the purity of women.[77] From the very first days of its scrutiny in Congress, the Mann Act won the immediate approval of President Taft, who promptly affirmed its constitutionality. Even though jurists had quickly identified at least three significant unconstitutional aspects of the act,[78] as the bill sailed through Congress, the main objection—raised by the Southern Democrats—concerned the issue of states' rights. This minority report bespoke the difficulty of conciliating the deeply felt duty to protect white female purity with the imperative of preserving the sovereignty of the individual states.

No one in Congress felt the need to clarify the open-ended expression “any other immoral purpose,” since the unspoken consensus on its meaning—forced prostitution—appeared a sufficient guarantee for its correct application. The Southern representatives, unwilling to allow federal regulation of the health and morals of their states’ citizens, tried to mount their argument in Congress, but faltered under Mann’s savvy usage of the white slave traffic statistics. Their hesitations finally dissolved in the face of the spurious but vivid claims raised by Representative Russel of Texas: in an effective *coup de théâtre*, he read to the House a newspaper article about a black man, John Frankling from Tifton, Georgia, who purportedly bought himself three wives at a white slave auction in Chicago.[79] Even though the author of the piece was Thomas E. Watson, a Georgia populist and clansman who simply claimed to have received a personal letter from Frankling, the uncanny fear of miscegenation immediately silenced the doubters and Mann seized the moment by revisiting the association of chattel slavery and white slavery —only to find the latter *more* outrageous.

The legislative gestation of the Mann Act gave a twist to the classic instrumental use of chattel slavery in the idiom of prostitution. Not only did its rhetorical flexibility prove suitable for cementing into law the dependency of all American-born women, but, painted white, slavery became a fetish occupying the places of a multiple absence. Absent was the traffic in American women; absent was the physical coercion for most women who chose to practice the profession or milder versions of it; and absent was a serious discussion of the structural causes of prostitution. In short, the specter of white slavery veiled the inadmissible truth that American (white) women were all potentially wayward and signified the lack around which the symbolic and juridical re-instatement of purity was tentatively organized. The expelled and repressed element, blackness, never really left the discourse, but sank out of plain sight, haunting the subconscious with visions of a grotesque black Bluebeard buying himself innumerable white wives. So compelling was the power of this fiction that the bill passed handily, and its language was anxiously misread even against the best interest of the voters. The specter of white slavery thus operated by embodying a

frustration and reifying the structural impossibility of law-enforced purity. But the Progressive congressmen never perceived, in this paradox, “the inertia that [could slow] their irresistible march to victory”; instead, they set about to enforce the newly minted act with unremitting confidence.[80]

Few Americans opposed the Mann Act, and the few who did only objected to its infringement of states’ rights or to the potential for blackmail. In the wider political landscape, the statute became so popular that a majority of states adopted “Little Mann Acts,” which additionally prohibited the transportation of prostitutes within state territory. These local measures, however, were strictly limited to acknowledged sex workers.[81] Many fervent reformers were nonetheless dissatisfied with the light sentences that judges imposed; this laxity was often ascribed to the generational gap separating the magistrates, mostly raised in the culture of the double standard, and the new reformers. Among the latter, Frederick Whitin of the Committee of Fourteen openly called for an “education of the judges that they could be abreast of the moral sentiment of the day.”[82] Since the Department of Justice was to handle the act’s enforcement, its police division—today’s FBI—became responsible for all investigations and apprehensions deriving from it. At the time the division was still known as the Bureau of Investigation and had been created by Theodore Roosevelt, against congressional opposition, through executive presidential order.[83] Thanks to the Mann Act, the Bureau underwent a dramatic increase in manpower and, though the government had previously hired private detectives, now official federal prosecutors were available in such great numbers, and with such extended powers, that they outclassed all other investigative forces.

Under the direction of Stanley Finch, the prosecutors developed methods for collecting information on Mann Act violations based on a census of prostitutes. This method implied tight cooperation between government agents, local police, and brothel owners; once the federal agents had obtained a clear picture of the prostitutional activities in a given area, it was easy to increase their indirect power through a careful selection of targets and the delegation of local police where the absence

of interstate activity impeded their mandate. Although the early years were marked by the difficulty of obtaining funds from a Congress still suspicious of a centralized investigative force, the importance of white slavery work within the Bureau grew to such an extent as to require its own subdivision. At its creation in 1912, the new section received delighted praise and support from all the Purity Movements. Slowly but inexorably, the Bureau of Investigation took over the surveillance work previously conducted by private organizations; the private organizations, in turn, publicly supported governmental activities as a realization of their particular vision of social improvement.[84]

As Fronc observes, in this transformative period the nation's intelligence agencies shifted from civil society to the government. The private societies that, only a few years earlier, had carried out their own explorations of the underworld, became subsidiary to the federal bureaus, whose agents may have been no less mercenary than their private counterparts, but whose vast legal powers supplemented the dubious ways of old-time impersonators with the force of official endorsement. Although the private civic committees may have been "participating into their own obsolescence"[85] by entering into collaborations that eventually usurped them, the gradual extension of the scope of the law realized their fantasies of control and reached unhoped-for depths of interference into the private lives of citizens. Subsequent adjudications even determined that the "immoral purpose" constituting the crime could simply be a state of mind, or, in legal words "an intention to entice into debauchery."[86] Soon afterward, even non-commercial travels across state lines by romantically involved consenting adults also began to constitute a federal offence.[87] In short, the application of the Mann Act tended to fulfill functions that were neither preventive nor punitive, but rather continued to follow, via the state, the criminalizing impulse that seemed to be lurking behind the intentions of private reformers.

"UNFORGIVABLE BLACKNESS"

The phantom-like John Frankling—the black man who supposedly bragged about his wifely purchases at the white slave market—was probably a figment of racist propaganda, but he still managed to tip congressional uncertainties in favor of a freedom-restricting federal bill. The real-life Jack Johnson,[88] of Galveston, Georgia—the first African American heavyweight champion in the history of boxing—never bought himself a wife, but he nonetheless, married four times, three times to white American women.[89] This detail alone could suffice to explain how Johnson's symbolic impact called for retaliation on the part of moral crusaders who, on this occasion, found themselves allied with federal prosecutors in Chicago. In 1913, Johnson was sentenced to prison for a supposed violation of the Mann Act in a legal decision that the U.S. Congress eventually recognized, though not until 2009, as a "racially motivated conviction prompted by his success in the boxing ring and his relationship with white women."[90] The fact that Johnson, a son of freed slaves, was technically indicted for practicing white slavery provides the exemplary completion of the transformational process involved in such a metaphor, the end point of a reversed logic turning the black slave into a black slave holder. Johnson's vicissitudes are illustrative of the ways in which the white slavery scare not only redefined white womanhood and criminalized blackness, but also supported a racially based ideology of white male power that conflated whiteness, physicality, and masculinity. This particular notion of white masculinity was threatened less by Johnson's matrimonial choices than by his groundbreaking athletic career, a parable whose ascending phase represented a hard blow to racial segregation in the sporting world. On the other hand, the descending phase of Johnson's story, starting with his indictment, epitomizes the criminalizing potential of the Mann Act. The Mann Act was applied when all other attempts to contain a non-servile, successful black man had failed.

At the end of Reconstruction, professional and amateur sports emerged as a significant presence in American cultural life and developed throughout the age of racial segregation. In the interpretation of Jackson Lears, the "quest for physical vitality which spread among the sedentary middle and upper classes"[91] surfaced like a counterweight to

the volatile circumstances of modernity that made the achievement of manliness at once more elusive and more urgent. The fascination with weightlifting, bodybuilding, and prizefighting reflected the reassertion of white manhood against the enervating impact of uncertain times.[92] At the turn of the century, boxing was still in its infancy and a largely illegal enterprise; yet it was followed obsessively by men of every class and had begun to develop its modern aesthetics. Jack Johnson's boxing style was disturbingly modern for his time: swift and intelligent, he picked off his opponents' blows and only punched with a clear aim. When boxer Jim Colbert had displayed the same defensive technique a decade earlier, he had been praised as the cleverest man in prize fighting. In contrast, in Johnson's case these stylistic features were derided in the press as the mark of the lazy, deceitful black man who carried into the ring the "cowardice" typical of his race.[93]

As historian Gail Bederman observes, "late Victorian culture had identified the powerful, large male body of the heavyweight prizefighter (and not the smaller bodies of the middleweight or welterweight) as the epitome of manhood."[94] In light of this projection, one easily understands why Johnson's elegant body was depicted as that of a "long-limbed, flat-chested, bullet-headed coon" and why the title holder Jim Jeffries, who had fought against other black men before he became world champion, initially refused to fight Johnson, invoking his respect for the prestigious award. Jeffries retired undefeated; but Johnson did not abandon his efforts to breach the bastions of the white title. Moreover, the most popular sport newspapers, responding to the meritocratic imperatives of the sporting world, which were in conflict with other imperatives in American society, maintained that it was time for the color line to be ignored.[95] In 1908, Johnson had the opportunity to fight the new heavyweight champion: Tom Burns, a Canadian boxer who had accepted the challenge, persuaded by the huge prize—and by an ill-calculated self-confidence. They fought in Sydney, Australia, and Johnson, who won the match in fourteen very civil rounds, became the first African American heavyweight champion. W. E. B. Du Bois hurried to comment on how Johnson had "out-sparred an Irishman with little brutality, the outmost fairness and great good nature."[96]

Nevertheless, the victory resounded as an insult and threat to white boxing fans. Almost immediately, a cry arose for a "great white hope" who could restore their sense of athletic pride and was the American language enriched with an enduring idiom. The origin of "White Hope" is still noted in today's dictionaries as "a white man who had a good chance of winning the heavyweight boxing championship from a Negro."[97] Since no able contender stepped up, an ageing and reluctant Jim Jeffries agreed to fight with the reported sole purpose "of proving that a white man is better than a negro."[98] In a match that was both a symbolic race war and one of the most celebrated sporting events in American history, Johnson won effortlessly, but deliberately slowly, wanting, he declared in his autobiography, to punish Jeffries. Through the sovereign way he managed the match, Johnson ostentatiously defended his authority in a white realm: the allegory was so transparent and unacceptable that Theodore Roosevelt, disgusted with the fight, or its implications, called for the prohibition of future interracial matches and, to mitigate the visual impact of demolished whiteness, led Congress to ban interstate distribution of fight films.[99]

In the immediate aftermath, the spectacle of the dethroned white king sparked vengeful riots nationwide, well beyond the borders of the inflammable Southern states. Contemporary reports counted eighteen people dead and hundreds injured overall. By any standards, white Americans' response to Johnson was excessive and, as is now widely acknowledged, since the boxer could not be defeated in the ring, the battle moved to his private life. Johnson had constantly flouted cultural norms, raising equal scandal in black and white communities: he was the quintessential "sport," flaunting beautiful clothes, fast cars, and gold-capped teeth. Johnson's particular investment in his self-fashioned dandyism is corroborated by a wealth of written and visual testimonies, not least of which is his highly fictionalized autobiography of 1926, purportedly written by himself, *Jack Johnson is a Dandy*. He embraced this role with such seriousness as to become the archetype of the racialized dandy and to stir those anxieties that Monica Miller defines as threats "to a supposed natural [white] aristocracy" excited by the "vision of an outstanding [black] citizen." These visions were particularly

powerful when flaunted in the face of a segregated society and featuring "an outsider broadcasting his alien status by clothing his dark body in a good suit."[100]

The seductive potency of the dandy was also an aspect amplified in Johnson's performances. From the beginning of his career, the boxer had become the object of intense feminine attention: women would flock to see him train and fight and he kept up the role by stuffing his pants with gauze in a simulation of virile superiority. He made no secret of his insatiable hunger for nightlife and white bawdyhouses; he openly associated with white prostitutes, many of whom he introduced as Mrs. Johnson, and one of whom he married. When his first white wife, Long Island divorcée Etta Terry Duryea, committed suicide in 1912, anti-miscegenists felt somehow vindicated and appeased. Still when, only weeks later, Johnson married nineteen-year-old Lucille Cameron, outrage was rekindled in black and white communities alike. Cameron was a white ex-prostitute who ostensibly worked in Johnson's restaurant bar in Chicago, the Café de Champion. The federal authorities, on the lookout for an incriminating pretext, were quick to agree with the girl's mother, who accused Johnson of having abducted her daughter and declared the girl insane. The prosecutors arrested the boxer accordingly; however, contrary to their expectations, Cameron refused to implicate Johnson in her choice to leave her hometown. Given the debacle, federal attorney Parkin instructed the Bureau of Investigation to scrutinize all of the travels that Johnson had made with white women, so that a Mann Act violation could be found.

NEITHER SUICIDE NOR PARIAH: BELLE SCHREIBER BETWEEN RESENTMENT AND *RESSENTIMENT*

There is no mention of dolls or teddy bears in the Johnson trial, but Belle Schreiber, the twenty-three-year-old white prostitute who gratuitously provided "the smoking gun" for Johnson's indictment, was often told to behave like the "good little girl that she was" while she waited to step on the witness stand in the Chicago trial.[101] The agents of the Bureau of Investigation had located Schreiber while she was working in a Washington brothel. Immediately taken to Chicago to

provide the fatal testimony before a grand jury, the woman was subsequently put in protective custody in New York, for fear that Johnson's henchmen would find her and persuade her to change her version before the trial. But in those humble quarters, a good girl she was not and, as she made clear in her letters, not even a wayward one in need of correction.[102] Addicted to drugs, alcohol, and the fast life, Schreiber often risked compromising her key role in the trial by fleeing her captivity. Unable to bear the boredom and the withdrawal symptoms, she repeatedly threatened to quit, exhausted the agents' patience and finances with the need for constant entertainment, and exploited every opportunity she had to consort with madams so that she could return to her trade as soon as possible. Quite obviously, when she managed to get to the trial, it was certainly not to redress the sins of her previous life by rendering her country a great service—as an unknowing agent surmised. Yet nor was she pursuing the personal vendetta of a "discarded mistress"—as Judge Carpenter implied while instructing the jury before the final verdict.[103]

Whereas speculations about the personal motives that led Schreiber to act as she did are inherently futile, reframing her performance within the theater of justice illuminates the import of white slavery with respect to the residual forms of agency it accorded to women. Social scientist Didier Fassin has analyzed reactive attitudes in response to an injury or an injustice in terms of "resentment" and "*ressentiment*." By turning to this distinction, Belle Schreiber's legal conduct can be reconsidered as a cumulative expression of these two moral sentiments. Inspired by public discourses difficult to comprehend in purely rational terms but explicable through these negative affects, Fassin's rearticulation of resentment and *ressentiment* aims to reassess simplistic notions of "the bright side and the dark side of our moral world" as well as "the separation of the ethical from the political."[104] In so doing, he has proposed to conceive of *ressentiment* according to the Nietzschean formulation and to view it as the rancor stemming from a collective past of oppression and domination. Conversely, going back to Adam Smith, Fassin posits resentment as the reaction to an ideological alienation determined by a social position that generates frustration and

acrimony. Resentment is unsocial, but nonetheless legitimate, and deserves to be assuaged via the available possibilities of retribution, under the disciplined guidelines of a purportedly impartial authority.[105]

Given her role in the trial, Schreiber has often been cast as "Johnson's nemesis," and seen as the accidental instrument whose intervention brought success to a racial project orchestrated by higher powers. Yet reading her testimony as merely functional obscures a broader interpretation of her resentment. While she might have begrudged Johnson his marriage to Lucille Cameron, or even the irregularity of his presence in her life, the court record is not explicit about this[106]—at least not in the judge's projection—and rather relates the story of a woman struggling to rise toward the professional apex of her quintessentially wayward occupation. Schreiber's first encounter with Johnson marked the beginning of a professional decline that she could never reverse. They met in 1909 while she was working at the legendary Chicago establishment known as the Everleigh Club, a deluxe brothel founded and exemplarily run by two Virginian sisters. The Everleigh sisters were the epitome of professionalism in their field and tolerated no amateurs among their "butterflies."[107] They paid exceptionally high wages, provided quality medical care, and allowed their employees maximum freedom whenever they decided to quit their job; yet to stay on the Everleighs's payroll, the strictest discipline and an impeccable etiquette were required. When Minna Everleigh reluctantly admitted Johnson into her whites-only parlor, she did so under the threat of losing her police protection and on condition that the boxer would not enjoy the services of her girls.[108] Thus, when Schreiber and four other women took off with Johnson for a ride in his touring car, she had no choice but to fire them all immediately—both to signal her authority to the other workers and to appease the racial convictions of her most affluent clients. In the years that followed, Schreiber and Johnson enjoyed an intense if intermittent relationship in which he would allegedly abuse her physically, but also continue to finance her many unsuccessful attempts to open her own business without ever demanding repayment or a share of the profits. Johnson would often have her travel with him, sometimes as one of the many Mrs. Johnsons,

or reach him where he was. In all the cities where they were together, Schreiber continued to ply her trade; in Pittsburgh she was even fired from the Paynter bawdyhouse for continuing to see the boxer. Financing these travels—that is, causing the transportation of a woman across state lines for the purpose of debauchery—constituted the crime of which Johnson was found guilty. For Schreiber, however, being the decisive witness in a case that—no matter how lopsidedly—required men to be more responsible in their relationships with women represented her only opportunity to obtain retribution for her professional and social resentment.

A more distanced reading of this courtroom performance reveals, especially to the modern reader, a certain measure of collective *ressentiment* as well. Not unlike Rollins's Cassie, Schreiber had once been a stenographer, and began pursuing the "sporting life" only in her early twenties.[109] While everything suggests that this decision was made in complete autonomy, her paradigmatic career path, probably embraced with high hopes, exposes the structural gender inequality that dwarfed the possibilities for an honest career in the face of the prostitutional market. The ethical-political form of subjectivation afforded by the Mann Act allowed Schreiber to become visible as a woman who chose her waywardness, even while the logic of the act nullified the relevance of women's choices in terms of morality. Becoming the publicized embodiment of this paradox is, in itself, an instance of *ressentiment*. As Fassin has explained, the atonement for the causes of *ressentiment* is always problematic and even practically impossible when the alienation at stake has been generated by historically vast and layered phenomena. What can be done, Fassin suggests, is to maintain *ressentiment*'s awkward presence in the collective memory. Schreiber does so twice: first by inhabiting the historical record while filling it with her narrative, and, no less importantly, by keeping the legal system on the verge of collapse. Her unreliability, her body attuned to the sporting life and recalcitrant to forced innocence, and her disdain for the color line clogged the legal machine, thus calling attention to its fragility and arbitrariness. By taking this opportunity to voice and relieve resentment and using it to tap an

unappeasable *ressentiment*, Schreiber symbolically channeled the silenced rage of the others among Johnson's white women, all written out of the moral and social horizon by the demeaning words of the chief prosecutor Harry Parkin: "Money and fame, such as it was, brought white women. One is a suicide, the others are pariahs."[110] Neither succumbing to despair, nor accepting exclusion from the polity, Schreiber countered the oblivion that would generally befall women of her kind, and withheld the forgiveness that Johnson—always generous to her—probably expected.[111] From Schreiber's vantage point, the final verdict is not a criminalization of blackness, but rather a criminalization of manhood—the site where oppressive patriarchy and an unequal economic system converged.

Moving away from a concept of reform that entailed embedded community care, civic committees embraced the fight against organized prostitution as a way of curbing the anxiety produced by the interracial landscape of the urban underworld. In so doing, these good-government activists introduced the white slavery hysteria into the legal realm. The factual and the "residual" aspects of this legal turn illuminate the racial and gendered idiosyncrasies that were desperately masked by the forceful imposition of white female purity as the standard of conduct. While Donovan has proposed a reading of the Moore case that considers its reverberations on discourses of gender, sexuality, and race from a sociological perspective, I have argued my interpretation through the dyad performance/performativity in order to reveal the intersection between the criminogenic aspects inherent to the process of adjudication and the dramaturgical elements that defined the investigative apparatus surrounding this particular case, as well as its wider resonances. Belle Moore's and Jack Johnson's experiences exemplify the currency of white slavery in a cultural landscape swept by an evolving administration of justice: in this capacity they represent an important development of the anti-prostitution campaign as well as an acceleration of the statistical and legalistic process of racial criminalization traced by Khalil Gibran Muhammad in *The Condemnation of Blackness*. Furthermore, these cases demonstrate how legislation was

used as a technology through which certain forms of wayward femininity straddling professionalism and criminality were foregrounded and, to a certain extent, tolerated, while others were effectively discredited and undone. In this regard, the self-narratives provided by women like Moore, Jackson, Foster, and Schreiber elucidate gendered socio-economic concerns in a system where "the capacity to manage capital, and to abide by the mechanism of accountability that modern commercial transactions entail, is adjudicated through ideas about the alleged morality of each party to a transaction."[112] Through the handling of these cases, the myth of white slavery reached a crucial stage, only months before the hygiene movement started to demand the regulation of prostitution and changed the course of the abolition campaign. Wielded to strike at mobility in the hope of controlling its twin, immorality, the Mann Act came into being just when interstate trains and trolley service made it easier to escape the physical boundaries of small-town and rural America, a locus where the virtue of the nation could supposedly survive untouched.

NOTES

1. Ethel Waters and Charles Samuels, *His Eye Is on the Sparrow: An Autobiography* (New York: Pyramid Communications, [1951] 1972), 155.
2. Cf. Donald Bogle, *Heat Wave: The Life and Career of Ethel Waters* (New York: Harper-Collins, 2011).
3. Waters and Samuels, *His Eye*, 154.
4. An expression attributed to the eighteenth-century British jurist Jeremy Bentham. Peter Schneck, "The Reflection of Race and Law in African American Literature," *American Studies Journal*, no. 51 (2008), accessed December 10, 2011, www.asjournal.org/archive/51/108.html.
5. "White Slave Sales Described in Court," *New York Times*, May 19, 1910.
6. Jennifer Fronc, *New York Undercover: Private Surveillance in the Progressive Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 102.
7. These states included New York, New Jersey, Michigan, Minnesota, and Illinois. Thomas R. Hietala, *The Fight of the Century: Jack Johnson, Joe Louis, and the Struggle for Racial Equality* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2002), 70.

8. An early and partial version of my analysis of the Moore Case has appeared in an issue of the academic journal *The Americanist-Warsaw Journal for the Study of the United States* dedicated to gender and sexuality. Some revised passages are reprinted with permission from my article "White Slavery and the Color Line: Redefining Sexuality in People v. Belle Moore," *The Americanist* 26, June (2011): 87–99.
9. George Kibbe Turner, "Tammany's Control of New York by Professional Criminals: A Study of a New Period of Decadence in the Popular Government of Great Cities," *McClure's Magazine* 33, no. June (1909), Turner, "The Daughters of the Poor."
10. The Rockefeller investigation was only one aspect of the city's fight against prostitution. For a more comprehensive view see George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890–1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 36; and Mara L. Keire, "The Committee of Fourteen and Saloon Reform in New York City, 1905–1920," *Business and Economic History* 26 (1997).
11. Cf. Brian Donovan, *White Slave Crusades: Race, Gender, and Anti-Vice Activism, 1887–1917* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 91.
12. Harry Levinson, alias Druckerman, procured Ida Greenberg and Augusta Ehrlich. "Judge Steps in to Aid Levinson," *New York Times*, June 17, 1910.
13. *The People v. Belle Moore*, 1169. Court of the General Session of the Peace, County of New York (1910). All the quotes from the trial transcripts will report the page number parenthetically in the text.
14. J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, [1962] 1975), 67–70.
15. For the distinction between force and meaning see ibid., 100.
16. Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Anchor Books, 1959), 25.
17. Ross Charnock, "Speech Acts in Legal Language," *Journal of Pragmatics* 41, no. 3 (2009): 401.
18. Richard Schechner, "Restoration of Behavior," in *Between Theater and Anthropology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 34.
19. Ibid., 36.

20. Considering that the first case to recognize and sustain a defense attorney's claim of entrapment by government officers took place only five years later (*Woo Wai v. United States*, 223 F. 412, CA9 1915), one can suggest that Karlin possibly shared a widespread desire to disentangle state officers from the unseemly ways of private justice.
21. Fronc, *New York Undercover*, 45.
22. Ibid., 48.
23. Interracial clubs were frequently referred to as Black and Tans. The term apparently originated in the South and denoted interracial cooperation, when black and white men combined in an election to defeat a white supremacist party. Cf. Kevin Mumford, *Interzones: Black/White Sex Districts in New York and Chicago in the Early Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 30.
24. Donovan, *White Slave Crusades*, 95.
25. Detective Miller reports that the middleman who introduced him to Belle Moore had been the one who "broke her in," a procedure normally described as involving an obvious degree of violence and coercion. Cf. *The People v. Belle Moore*, 12.
26. For a definition of mistrial as included in the Austinian doctrine of infelicities see Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 25–26.
27. In the early decades of the twentieth century, secular vice societies took the morality of the city under their wing. The short-lived Committee of Fifteen was a New York City citizens' group that lobbied for the elimination of prostitution and gambling but was disbanded in 1901, one year after its establishment. It was succeeded by the Committee of Fourteen (1905–1932), which became the prototype of the Vice Commissions that were subsequently formed in many U.S. cities. Robert M. Dowling, *Slumming New York: From the Waterfront to Mythic Harlem* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007).
28. Cf. Fronc, *New York Undercover*, 27 and Béatrice Hibou, "De La Privatisation Des Économies À La Privatisation Des États," in Béatrice Hibou, ed., *La Privatisation Des États* (Paris: Editions Karthala, 1999).
29. An example of the power of case law was the landmark decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896).
30. Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), 164.

31. Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 13.
32. Wai Chee Dimock, *Residues of Justice: Literature, Law, Philosophy* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1996), 5.
33. Ibid.
34. Pamela Haag, *Consent: Sexual Rights and the Transformation of American Liberalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 82.
35. Ibid., 201.
36. Margit Stange, *Personal Property: Wives, White Slaves and the Market in Women* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 2.
37. Scott Herring, *Queering the Underworld: Slumming, Literature, and the Undoing of Lesbian and Gay History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 11.
38. As the *New York Times* reported, the Jewish girls that the two investigators had bought from Harry Levinson had been paid less than a third of the price contracted with Moore for the American prostitutes. "Four White Slaves Were Sold For $160," *New York Times*, May 3, 1910.
39. Donovan, *White Slave Crusades*, 95.
40. "Belle Moore Guilty of Selling Girls," *New York Times*, May 20, 1910.
41. Fuller instead denied the fact. Cf. ibid., 196–97.
42. "Belle Moore is a very light mulatto, probably not more than 35, with a thin acrid face." "White Slave Sales Described in Court" *New York Times*, May 19, 1910.
43. Michel Farbe, "New Orleans Belles and Balls: The Quadroon as Sexual Icon—Myths and Realities," in Alfred Hornung, ed., *Sexualities in American Culture* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2004), 9–10.
44. "White Slave Sales Described in Court," *New York Times*, May 19, 1910.
45. Robin Bernstein, *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood from Slavery to Civil Rights* (New York: New York University Press, 2011).
46. Hon. William Bennet later co-authored the Mann Act. Cf. Fronc, *New York Undercover*, 66.
47. Letter from W. E. B. Du Bois to the Committee of Fourteen secretary Fredrick Whitin in which Du Bois indicts the Committee of violating civil

rights laws in New York State. See ibid., 119.
48. Cf. Cathryn Halverson, “The Fascination of the Working Girl: Dorothy Richardson’s *The Long Day*,” *American Studies* 40, no. 1 (1999).
49. Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late Victorian London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 50. Also see the case of Elsie Sigel’s murder in Esther Romeyn, *Street Scenes: Staging the Self in Immigrant New York*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 60–64.
50. The reference is to the title of an article published in *Munsey’s Magazine* in 1909 quoted in Romeyn, *Street Scenes*, 69.
51. Cf. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, “Discourses of Sexuality and Subjectivity: The New Woman, 1870–1936,” in Martin Duberman, Martha Vicinius, and George Chauncey, eds., *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past* (New York: Meridian, 1990), 242.
52. “Belle Moore Guilty of Selling Girls,” *New York Times*, May 20, 1910.
53. Chad Heap sheds light on the significance of such a detail: “While some white women used slumming as an excuse to give white men easier access to their bodies, most middle-class women accompanied their suitors and husbands to black-and-tan cabarets just as they would on any other date—to solidify their relationship with these men and simultaneously proclaim their ‘emancipation’ as New Women.” Chap Heap, *Slumming: Sexual and Racial Encounters in American Nightlife, 1885–1940* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 197.
54. Val Marie Johnson, “‘Look for the Moral and Sex Sides of the Problem’: Investigating Jewishness, Desire, and Discipline at Macy's Department Store, New York City, 1913,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 18, no. 3 (2009): 478.
55. See Regina G. Kunzel, “Situating Sex: Prison Sexual Culture in the Mid-Twentieth-Century United States,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 8, no. 3 (2002) and Sarah Potter, “Undesirable Relations: Same-Sex Relationships and the Meaning of Sexual Desire at a Women's Reformatory During the Progressive Era,” *Feminist Studies* 30, no. 2 (2004).
56. Cheryl D. Hicks, “‘Bright and Good Looking Colored Girl’: Black Women’s Sexuality and ‘Harmful Intimacy’ In Early-Twentieth-Century,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 18, no. 3 (2009): 446.

57. Ibid., 447.
58. White inmates were rarely described as initiating relationships, but rather inveigled by the virile black women. Cf. Estelle Freedman, "The Prison Lesbian: Race, Class, and the Construction of the Aggressive Female Homosexual, 1915–1965," *Feminist Studies* 22, no. 2 (1996): 400–1.
59. Teresa de Lauretis, *The Practice of Love: Lesbian Sexuality and Perverse Desire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).
60. "Under cross-examination Mrs. Foster was icily calm, and only smiled slightly at some of Lawyer Carlin's [*sic*] sallies." "Belle Moore Guilty of Selling Girls," *New York Times*, May 20, 1910.
61. "Ill Chosen Agents of Reform," *New York Times*, May 21, 1910.
62. Khalil Gibran Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 272.
63. Ibid., 139.
64. David J. Langum, *Crossing Over the Line: Legislating Morality and the Mann Act* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 44.
65. Langum explains that "The statute, dating from 1910, has now been significantly amended. However, Congress has never had the courage to repeal an absurd law that has been used, and still could be used . . . to persecute selected individuals." Ibid., 3. In 1978, Congress updated the definition of "transportation" in the act and added protection for minors of either sex against sexual exploitation. A 1986 amendment further protected minors and replaced "debauchery" and "any other immoral purpose" with "any sexual activity for which any person can be charged with a criminal offense." That allowed the government to quit "legislating morality" while retaining the Mann Act as a weapon in the fight against human trafficking.
66. See Paul Spickard, *Almost All Aliens: Immigration, Race and Colonialism in American History and Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 238; and Leti Volpp, "Divesting Citizenship: On Asian American History and the Loss of Citizenship through Marriage," *UCLA Law Review* 52, paper no. 870087 (2005).

67. See for example *Keller v. United States* (1909) in Frederick K. Grittner, *White Slavery: Myth, Ideology and American Law* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1990), 85; and Mark T. Connelly, *The Response to Prostitution in the United States* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 52–54.
68. George Kneeland had also directed the investigations in Chicago. See Erik Anderson, "Prostitution and Social Justice: Chicago, 1910-15," *Social Service Review* 48, no. 2 (1974).
69. Langum, *Crossing over the Line*, 35; and Connelly, *The Response to Prostitution*, 55.
70. Connelly, *The Response to Prostitution*, 56.
71. In the congressional debate on the Mann Act, Representative Gordon Russel of Texas voiced this connection clearly by stating that "no nation can rise higher than the estimate which it places upon the virtue and purity of its womanhood. . . . This bill is a tribute to every pure and good woman in this land." Quoted from *Congressional Record*, 61st Cong., 2nd sess., January 19, 1910, 821 as referenced in Grittner, *White Slavery*, 83.
72. Grittner, *White Slavery*, 96.
73. Haag, *Consent*, 52.
74. *Cook v. The People* quoted in ibid., 39.
75. Carole Pateman, "Women and Consent," in *The Disorder of Women: Democracy, Feminism and Political Theory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 71.
76. Haag, *Consent*, 39–41.
77. See Grittner, *White Slavery*, 98.
78. These are: the impossibility of regulating the purposes of private travel under the interstate commerce clause; the violation of the Constitution's immunity clause, which would prohibit the imposition of travel restrictions on free citizens; and the violation of the Tenth Amendment in attempting to regulate a matter of private morals, a power reserved to the States. Langum, *Crossing Over the Line*, 62.
79. Grittner, *White Slavery*, 95.
80. Wiebe, *The Search for Order*, 65.
81. Langum, *Crossing over the Line*, 71.
82. Ibid., 60.

83. The Division was famously renamed Federal Bureau of Investigation in 1935. See Max Lowenthal, *The Federal Bureau of Investigation* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1950), 3–10.
84. Fronc, *New York Undercover*, 178.
85. Ibid., 179.
86. This development was marked by the decision of the case *Athanasaw v. United States* (1913).
87. As validated by the legal history of the case *Caminetti v. United States* (1917).
88. Some of my considerations on Jack Johnson have appeared in a different context and in an earlier version in the following article "'(Un)forgivable Blackness' and the Oval Office: Jack Johnson and H. L. Gates at the post-racial White House," *Race Gender and Class Journal* 17, no. 3 and 4 (2010): 9–18. Some revised passages are included with permission.
89. Before his days of fame Johnson married Mary Austin, a black woman from his hometown, but they soon divorced. Johnson's first white wife was Etta Duryea, married in 1911 and who, a year later, committed suicide. The third wife was former prostitute Lucille Cameron, married in 1912. In 1925 Johnson married Irene Pineau, a divorcée from Peoria. Cf. Geoffrey Ward, *Unforgivable Blackness: The Rise and Fall of Jack Johnson* (New York: Knopf, 2004); and Hietala, *The Fight of the Century*.
90. S.Con.Res.16. In October 2009, for the first time, a resolution urging posthumous pardon for Johnson passed both houses of Congress reaching the presidential desk. In December of the same year the Department of Justice declined the request.
91. T. J. Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877–1920* (New York: Harper Collins, 2009), 93.
92. Ibid., 94
93. Ward, *Unforgivable Blackness*.
94. Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 23.
95. Randy Roberts, *Papa Jack: Jack Johnson and the Era of White Hopes* (London: Anova Books, 1992), 50.
96. Ward, *Unforgivable Blackness*.

97. Robert Sklar, “This Sporting Life,” *Reviews in American History* 11, no. 4 (1983).
98. “Is Prize-Fighting Knocked Out?” *Literary Digest* 41 (July 16, 1910): 85.
99. See Dan Streible, *Fight Pictures: A History of Boxing and Early Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).
100. Cf. Monica L. Miller, *Slaves to Fashion* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 11.
101. Hietala, *The Fight of the Century*, 68.
102. Ward, *Unforgivable Blackness*, 317–18.
103. Hietala, *The Fight of the Century*, 68, 85.
104. Didier Fassin, “On Resentment and *Ressentiment*: The Politics and Ethics of Moral Emotions,” *Current Anthropology* 54, no. 3 (2013): 249.
105. Ibid., 251.
106. The volume of Records and Briefs for appellate case 2017, *Jack Johnson vs. the United States of America* contains extensive but edited and condensed testimony by numerous witnesses, including Belle Schreiber. It is available at the National Archives in Chicago.
107. The most reliable and exhaustive book about the Everleigh sister is Karen Abbot, *Sin in the Second City: Madams, Ministers Playboys, and the Battle for America’s Soul* (New York: Random House, 2007).
108. Johnson’s manager George Little was apparently in charge of “doling out protection.” See ibid., 180.
109. Ward, *Unforgivable Blackness*, 148.
110. Ibid., 345.
111. Declared guilty, Johnson managed to leave the country after the trial. For seven years he endeavored to obtain a more lenient sentence, but to no avail. In 1920 he returned to the United States to serve a ten-month sentence and pay a thousand-dollar fine. By that time he was an impoverished and defeated champion, and the photograph of him losing the title to the white fighter Jess Willard in Havana in 1915 remained a standard icon in southern white bars for many years after. Cf. Al-Tony. Gilmore, *Bad Nigger! The National Impact of Jack Johnson* (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1975). Even decades after Johnson lost the title, new black champions like Joe Louis and Floyd Patterson were warned at the beginnings of their careers that they should “never disgrace the race.” It was only in the 1960s with the rise of another

controversial champion, Cassius Clay, that the boxer's name was recalled from oblivion. Cf. Ward, *Unforgivable Blackness*.

112. Michael Ralph, "The Problem of Citizenship, the Question of Crime, and the Origins of the Civil Rights Movement," *Transition*, no. 111 (2013): 182.

Chapter 4

Staging Waywardness: Rachel Crothers's *Ourselves*

> Acted, it is incredibly worse.
> —*New York Times*, 1905

Hoping to sell some more newspapers to help the labor cause, the protagonist of Theresa Malkiel's *Diary of a Shirtwaist Striker* goes "up Broadway to meet the theater-going crowds." There, Mary is appalled at the spectacle of "vultures in human shape," that is, the wealthy patrons of indigent prostitutes. As a complement to this scene, she witnesses "young men escorting their ladies to theaters and at the same time flirting with the girls on the corner."[1]

The episode pinpoints the physical vicinity of the practice of prostitution to the theater, and the triangular dynamic of the double standard. This societal custom often linked upper-class ladies with lowlife girls through the divided attention of a bourgeois man, and thrived on the man's capacity to keep the two worlds intimately close but rigorously apart. That the map of theatrical entertainment overlapped with the map of vice is not a coincidence of Mary's excursion. Prostitution and the theater had a long history of proximity that went beyond the thematic relationship that emerged with prominence in the "brothel plays" of the early 1910s. In Victorian America the infamous third tier of city theaters hosted the poorer playgoers, professional prostitutes, and free blacks;[2] during the nineteenth century theaters and brothels often relocated together as the urban pattern changed;[3] and Broadway's liminoid quality has been associated with a distinctly raffish element.[4] Due to a certain "antitheatrical prejudice"[5] and to the spatial closeness of theaters and brothels, the practitioners of these institutions were also often conflated in the public mind, an impression often reinforced by the plots of the plays (*The Easiest Way*), the biography of some actresses (Sarah Bernhardt), and the abundance of female roles as variations on the

fallen woman. Still, contrary to this identification of the theater as a kaleidoscope of the double standard, and also in contrast to the conservative rhetoric upheld by most white slave plays, there were authors who exploited the stage to take the public debate on this topic in new directions. Outstanding among them was the playwright and actress Rachel Crothers.[6] Although her reception as a feminist author was, and still is, controversial, Crothers's attention to the role of women in society is consistently present in the scores of plays she produced in a uniquely successful career spanning from the beginning of the twentieth century to the late 1930s. Crothers's feminism was acute enough to provide illuminating depictions of the New Woman's dilemmas, but also subtle enough to be successful in the mainstream commercial theater of the time and, therefore, to deflect some critical interest, in the way it occurs to bestsellers.[7] This chapter will consider Crothers's prostitution play of 1913, *Ourselves*, in the context of the white slavery drama craze that stormed Broadway with particular force during the 1913–1914 season.[8] Paying particular attention to Crothers's writing as a blend of melodrama and realism, I will explore how this hybridity altered the author's contract with her middle-class audience. Showing how *Ourselves* effectively hijacks the standard male gaze of the theatrical audience, I will highlight the emotionally intense relationships that Crothers arranges between the wayward protagonist and the other women on the stage and how they affect the reception of a peculiarly "wayward audience." Crothers's nuancing of the corporeal and emotional repertoire will emerge as dramaturgic device that renders both the limitations and the possibilities of reform and female solidarity across class lines.

REALISM AND OBSCENITY ON THE STAGE AND ON THE SCREEN

As drama historian Katie Johnson has recently documented, "brothel drama thrived in the 1910s, both on the stage and on the screen."[9] In its day the term referred mostly to the sensational white slave plays—the bulk of prostitute theater—but also to plays that included a woman

character tainted in a way that made her indistinguishable from a prostitute. Not surprisingly, the stage mirrored the Progressives' confusion about the term, and participated in the hysteria surrounding it. Obscure and well-known authors alike seemed compelled to write prostitution dramas: between 1898 and 1922 the theme was treated in approximately fifty produced plays, ranging from "fallen girl" musicals to "unfortunate working girl" plays to "social problem" plays. As the interest in social evil soared, actresses built careers on repertories largely consisting of fallen woman roles and the stages were so full of such plays that by the early 1910s a critic declared himself "sick of the talk of white slavery."[10] Like some of the sensational tenement literature of the preceding decades that tied the "typifying touch" of a certain brand of realism to an ongoing fascination with the urban exotic, most white slavery plays used prostitution as a sensational pretext for the propagation of common morality, as well as an excuse for vicarious slumming tours through the underworld of commercial sex.[11] Nonetheless, the attention of the censors on the one hand, and some subtle authorial and performative originalities on the other, reveals how the brothel drama was shaped by both the hegemonic and the subversive mode. The tension between these two polarities characterizes the brief history of the genre in the Progressive Era, a peculiar arc that started with the first obscenity case that befell Olga Nethersole's *Sapho* in 1900 and unfolded over the next two decades through bouts of rabid censorship before finally achieving the legitimizing recognition of the Pulitzer Prize, awarded in 1921 to Eugene O'Neill's *Anna Christie*.

As the first obscenity trial of the twentieth century, the *Sapho* case opened with the arrest of Nethersole herself, the leading actor, manager, and owner of Wallack's Theater. The chronicles of the court case demonstrate that it was less the bold rewriting of Alfonse Daudet's cautionary tale that stirred scandal than Nethersole's daring dramatic persona.[12] Five years later a similar destiny befell Bernard Shaw's *Mrs. Warren's Profession*. Rather than sentimentalize the purified deviant, Shaw's play presented the first sympathetic portrait of a self-confident prostitute/madam, combined with an economic account of the roots of vice. The indefatigable Anthony Comstock readily succeeded in shutting

down the production on its second night. The indecency trial was decided seven months later in favor of the theater manager by the New York Court of Special Session; the play was nonetheless banned for two years in America.[13] The trials of the producers of *Sapho* and *Mrs. Warren's Profession* were not isolated events, but rather prodromes of the widespread censorship of brothel plays beginning in the mid-1910s. Rachel Crothers's production of *Ourselves* happened to be uncomfortably wedged between three censorship cases that took place between September and December 1913. At the beginning of autumn that year, George Scarborough's *The Lure* and Bayard Veiller's *The Fight* were closed because of their realistic portrayal of brothel interiors. After camouflaging the brothel scenes, both plays were allowed to return to the stage, where they were received as *causes célèbres*.[14] Only five weeks after the premiere of *Ourselves*, actress and producer Cecil Spooner was at the center of another dramatic police raid of a brothel play. Acting in an adaptation of *The House of Bondage* in her theater in the Bronx, the actress was arrested on the stage and taken immediately to the night court, famous for being the court reserved for prostitutes.[15]

White slavery on the stage confronted both the status of theatrical art and the boundaries of representation by challenging a notion of obscenity that relied on the lowest common denominator of acceptability.[16] The legally operative criterion of corruptibility seemed to conflate the reception of sensual knowledge with moral perdition, as if seeing and being tainted were one and the same for the morally virgin youth. It is not by chance that, with early brothel plays in mind,[17] the Committee of Fourteen and Comstock's Society for the Suppression of Vice had pushed for the creation of Penal Law 1140 in 1909, which deliberately blurred the distinctions between "obscene, indecent, immoral, [and] impure." This abundance of deviations was supposedly triggered by the "reality effect" of the staged interiors that became a potent metonymy of arousal—for the men—and a pernicious influence—for the women.

Illusionistic realism in stagecraft, which the public often appreciated, was critically received as superficial, but its prominence expressed the

conflicts of an era of transition: the *mise-en-scène* became a quasi-character on stage, interpellating the spectator in ways that conflicted with the plot—often the most conservative element of these plays. Whereas realistic set decor at the time was often a self-congratulatory exercise, in authors like Scarborough and Veiller it matched an interest in social verisimilitude that foreshadowed modern concerns with authenticity in "character." Unfortunately for these authors, quasi-naturalistic settings signified to the censors only the essence of the brothel as a "scriptive" environment.

As Robin Bernstein has postulated for objects functioning as "scriptive things," a brothel, even if only a piece of scenery, easily becomes a "scriptive place" in that its presence "hails users (individually and in groups) inviting identifiable body responses."[18] Likewise, the identification of the actress with the prostitute she impersonates on stage (see the night court for Cecil Spooner or the agitation around Olga Nethersole) reveals a consideration of the prostitute as a "scriptive body," no matter whether real or staged. A notorious believer in realistic stagecraft such as David Belasco, for example, although obsessed with the most mundane true-to-life details of his mise en scène, would have neither painted women nor bawdyhouses presented to his audience.[19] One can infer that this opposition sprang from these topoi's scriptive force, a performative drive reinforced by the residual Victorianism defining the (covert) pornographic imagination of the Progressive Era. As Susan Sontag put it, pornography is so uniquely formulaic—or scriptive, we could say—that it cannot even accommodate its own parody without being co-opted in the orthodoxy of the genre itself. White slavery, treated as a code for pornography, apparently could not accommodate its own criticism because even the most well-meaning plotline, when realistically staged, remained anchored to the potency of the locus of pleasure and perdition *par excellence*. The scarce articulation of the characters common to brothel plays only maximized the impact of the setting, which seemed to speak all too clearly. In this logic, censorship protected the viewers from this commanding materiality and theoretically allowed the plays to be read in a wider context—be it denunciation, protest, or uplift.

In this stringent referential logic, men and women exposed to the "obscenity" were recast in the only roles admitted by the genre at hand: conniving men and dishonorable women. The double standard of conduct that discounted men's sexual infractions and exaggerated women's was reflected in the treatment of the producers and viewers of the incriminated plays. Male theater professionals were punished for having betrayed the code of silence that kept certain behaviors a secret necessity, but were ultimately treated leniently and given a chance to modify and reform. Women, on the contrary, still defined by a rhetoric of fallenness, were disciplined for their breaching of the code of purity, a contravention, which impeded their rehabilitation into the legitimate professional space. To complete the triangular construction of the double standard, the mechanism of censorship tended to envelop the ladies in the public—who reportedly flocked to the performances in great numbers—in a veil of "protective" silence: in fact, once the offensive décors, which may have planted a seed of suspicion and knowledge, were replaced with the semblances of safe environments, most risks were thought of as removed.

In the peculiar genre of the white slavery narrative, there is an eerie mirroring between the infantilization of the audience—its female portion in particular—and the infantilization of the female protagonist. This conservative stand is even clearer in the white slavery films of the same period and it can be partially explained by the fact that the years between 1909 and 1925 constituted a pivotal moment for the nascent film industry, "an extended moment of risk,"[20] during which the institution of cinema negotiated its own status in the entertainment business. The mechanisms of control of the medium were still fluid and the self-appointed censorious authorities within the film industry concentrated on eliminating potentially corruptive images, partly in keeping with the all-pervasive spirit of reform, and partly in an effort to establish the cinema among the noble arts.[21] Far from being immune to the white slavery craze, the movie business took advantage of the popular trend to experiment in techniques of naturalistic representation while testing the limits of accepted decency. Early in the century, the first white slavery films provided warnings to young city girls mingled with

titillating tales of sadism, racist stereotypes, and conversion stories. According to Kay Sloan, these early movies paved the way "for the grandest spectacle of all in the series of white slave films," a spectacle that film historian Kevin Brownlow has considered a consequence of the atmosphere created by the stage melodramas. In 1913, when the white slavery craze reached its peak in the theaters, it became a full-blown obsession in the cinemas, with two filmmakers at Universal Studios, George Loan Tucker and Walter McNamara, deciding to make a melodrama based on the Rockefeller Commission's report. By the summer they had completed what was to become a cinematic sensation: *Traffic in Souls*. According to widespread rumors, Tucker had been inspired by the melodramas he had seen on Broadway, especially *The Lure* and *The Fight*, two plays that had attracted censors and viewers in equal measure.[22] Similarly, *Traffic in Souls* suffered some minor censorship,[23] but also became the most successful film of the year. Quite unsurprisingly, while many critics, reformers, and suffragists praised it, some Christian associations and reviewers were alarmed by its "demoralizing" potential.[24]

Traffic in Souls was rooted in the theater in more than inspiration. Among its chief investors and early advisors was Lee Shubert of the Shubert Theatrical Company; and the film first triumphed at the Joe Weber Theater, which was owned by the Shuberts, and was the exact same venue where Scarborough's play *The Lure* had been a big success.[25] This intrusion of the upstart medium into the classical venue was not welcomed by all theater professionals. In 1913 motion pictures were still striving to obtain full-fledged social respectability: Oscar Hammerstein—the opera buff and renowned librettist, director, and producer of musical theater—sued his lessee David Belasco for permitting *Traffic in Souls* to be shown at his Republic Theater, a venue that had been contracted to produce only first-class performances.[26] As a testimony to the changing times, Hammerstein lost on appeal, and within a few weeks twenty-eight theaters in the New York area were proudly showing the film. As Shelley Stamp has noted, the theme of white slavery was the turning point in the rivalry between the traditional entertainment of the middle classes, the stage play, and the unstoppable advancement of the motion picture.

[27] Voicing the opinion of the traditional advocates of the theater, the *New York World* cast the stage as the white slave of the cinema, exploited and tyrannized by the growing popularity of the movies.[28] To put it less dramatically, the success of white slave films certainly accelerated the conversion of repertoire theaters into movie houses in the early 1910s.[29]

The enormous financial success of *Traffic in Souls* immediately called for emulation, and the last months of 1913 saw the appearance of *The Inside of the White Slave Traffic*. Of all the films that tapped the white slave craze, this one sparked the biggest controversy, likely because of its claim to naturalism. Leaving behind the staging and dramatic constructions of the typical melodrama, *The Inside* veered toward the documentary. For the first time audiences were presented with street scenes shot on location in which real prostitutes solicited in public; the crudeness of bordello life, stripped of all romanticism, was shown in its exploitative economy as well as in its deadly consequences. The trafficking scenario became, in this film, a metaphor for the larger socio-economic forces that curtailed women's freedom.[30] The man who posed as the film's only producer, Samuel H. London, had served in the Rockefeller Commission and other anti-vice organizations. To avoid legal obstacles, London actively sought public endorsement on the part of respectable public figures and stressed the educational intention of his work. The National Board of Censorship of Motion Pictures, formed in 1909 in an alliance between Progressive reformers and film industry producers,[31] interfered quite heavily with the finished product by dictating cuts of all the bawdy house scenes unnecessary to the narrative, and explicitly prescribing both the punishment of the trafficker and the downfall of the lost girl.[32] This censorship did not, however, compromise the film's enormous box office success; theater operators without white slave films to show exploded in acrimony. Their protest was worded, once again, in claims of the cultural superiority of the theater over the movie house and as a call for parity in censorship of both films and plays.[33] For a film industry striving to achieve a more respectable reputation by appealing to middle-class viewers, the

vicissitudes of such a profitable but thorny issue were a constant reminder of the hidden pitfalls of show business.

The heyday of the white slave season was tumultuous and short-lived for both the theater and the cinema, although the vein was exploited for a few more years. By the early months of 1914 the sensation had begun to wane and parodies of prostitution movies were already being produced. Kaufmann's novel *The House of Bondage* was adapted for the screen while its police-raided and bowdlerized stage version was still running; however, despite the publicity it garnered from the drama surrounding the play, the movie was a flop.[34] All the cheap blockbuster imitations quickly thrown into circulation that year were shunned by critics and audiences alike. As a final blow to the cinematic vogue, *Variety* refused to advertise white slave films, thus stigmatizing them for the public and, more importantly, for the movie industry itself. Amid the hubbub of the rapid rise and fall of the white slavery craze and the contest between theater and cinema that it galvanized, the narrative conventions that emerged remained remarkably stable and consistent. On the stage as well as on the screen, white slavery narratives were structured by a stringently mimetic realism of scenery and typically melodramatic conventions of plot. The politics of production of white slavery plays and movies bespoke the traditional double standard of behavior and were propelled almost invariably by the same moralizing normative drive. In this light Rachel Crothers's intervention in the Broadway season of 1913–1914 was a dramatic break with convention.

AMERICAN DOCUMENTS, FEMINIST VISIONS

In the early 1910s, especially on Broadway, authors who considered themselves a "dramatic realists" tended to be fairly critical of melodramatic productions that the middle-class audiences seemed to champion.[35] When critic and playwright Florence Kiper lamented in 1914 that America had "no Ibsens, Shaws, Bjørnsons, Strindbergs, Brieux" to bring "a conscious philosophy and an informed understanding" to the vital women's issue, she was pointing out the scarcity of socially aware plays that she identified as the trademark of the European realist tradition.[36] While melodrama is not completely

incompatible with realist aesthetics, in this particular period of American literature, melodrama, and realism each pertained to different understandings of representation and society.[37] Crothers's advocacy of realism as the "highest form of dramatic writing" must be seen in this light.[38] For Crothers, realism was also the most appropriate aesthetic frame for presenting the socio-political paradox of the female condition at that historical juncture: a condition teetering between the availability of increased liberties and the advent of more subtle setbacks and proscriptions.[39] In her play *Ourselves*, the prostitute on stage inhabits the dangers and the possibilities of that position and becomes part of an "enunciative strategy"[40] that produces a more conscious collective female subject in the institutional site of the theater.

Among the various types of nineteenth-century drama that appeared on the American stage, the native tradition from which Crothers's early plays stemmed was what Brenda Murphy calls "the drama of contemporary life."[41] The frank themes, the colloquial diction, and the more understated acting of these plays were still uncommon ingredients in American theater.[42] The equivalent of the French *drame bourgeois*, these plays often retained melodramatic or comic elements, but were nonetheless pre-realist in that they overtly commented on the social conditions of American life.[43] Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll House*, published in 1879 and professionally produced for the first time in America in 1883, was the exemplary European accomplishment of what these crude American attempts were emulating, even though a country "not yet ripe for Ibsen" received the play coldly.[44] The extremely young Rachel Crothers did however feel ripe for the Nordic author, as she mentioned both in her lecture "The Construction of a Play" and in the acceptance speech she gave at the White House for the highest recognition she ever received, the Chi Omega Award.[45] Crothers described an adolescent self fully immersed in the activities of her Bloomington Drama Club and enthusiastically stumbling upon a literary giant: "I discovered a play called *The Doll's House* [sic], by a man named Ibsen, which I struggled to persuade the older members of the club would be an excellent thing for us to produce after it had been somewhat rewritten by me."[46] At the White House in 1939, when

Crothers again recalled this early discovery, she indicated the source of her fascination for Ibsen in the balanced mixture of quietness and excitement found in the play and in the characters' speaking "like real people do." In this significant backward glance, Crothers pinpointed her adherence to the recent American adoption of the "discussion play" inspired by Shaw and Ibsen, as well as her attention to the demands of the commercial theater. For Crothers, realism of character and thought, brilliant dialogues, and relevant topics were the leading motifs of her precocious talent as well as key ingredients of her mature signature blend. Essential to her conception of authorship, personhood, and professionalism, this commitment to social and psychological reality led Crothers to probe into the woman question over and over again in about thirty plays, most of which were Broadway hits.[47]

Crothers had been tackling New Woman themes from before the turn of the century: in her play *Criss Cross* from 1899, a self-supporting woman writer gives up the man she loves to secure her cousin's happiness;[48] in 1903, her one-act play titled *Nora* showcased her first studies of class distinction and was reviewed in a New York newspaper as a play in which "the pall of amateurism dropped from these amateurs as a garment, and they walked through real scenes of real life like real people."[49] In 1906, *The Three of Us*—Crothers's first professionally produced work—was a tremendous success despite its breaking with a long-established stage convention, namely the loss of a woman's honor in the event of her being discovered in a gentleman's room.[50] About a decade later, a writer for *The Nation* still celebrated this attack on the double standard as the deathblow an obsolete theatrical etiquette.[51] In the plays that spanned the period from her professional debut to the white slavery vogue, Crothers attempted to find a balance between her penchant for melodramatic storylines and the social poignancy of the New Woman's problems.[52] She investigated themes such as female professionalism, the role of romantic fulfillment, modern marriage, and familial responsibility, always putting at center stage "restless women" who were attempting to live out their destiny.[53]

Considering this decade of preparation, it is no surprise that Crothers's treatment of the white slavery theme amounted to an

overturning of the classic brothel play and a thorough reinvention of the wayward girl theme. As a matter of fact, records show that the author had been conceptualizing *Ourselves* already in 1912, and that she carefully revised it for a year, rather than rushing to capitalize on the prostitution drama vogue. Traces of the issues developed in *Ourselves* are already present in *A Man's World*, written in 1909.[54] This play centers on Frank Ware, an unmarried woman with a man's name and ambition, who lives the quasi-bohemian life of the female intellectual. Civic-minded and deeply invested in social maternalism, Frank entertains the idea of "educating" the girls of the streets into "decent women" and plans to open a rescue home.[55] The issue of reform remains peripheral to the sustained critique of the double standard that lies at the core of the play, yet the ideas only skirted in *A Man's World* are resumed in *Ourselves* and given new poignancy by the introduction of the "object of reform" into the plot. The girls of the street, who in the older play remain off stage—ob-scene, as etymology reveals—enter *Ourselves* with a vengeance, populating the cast and taking over the lead role.

The play in fact revolves around the character of Molly, a former prostitute who, in the first act, is introduced as the beautiful and unruly guest of a reform home where the long-time reformer Miss Carew supervises a group of wayward girls. The high-minded Beatrice Barrington, a young aristocrat eager to improve society, takes an interest in Molly and, determined to re-educate her, hires the girl as her personal secretary. The reformative process continues in the wealthy Barrington household as Molly moves into the New York mansion that Beatrice occupies with her artist brother, Bob, and his aloof wife, Irene. The rest of the play follows Molly's vicissitudes in the rich home, and analyzes the consequences of the girl's sentimental involvement with the libertine Bob Barrington. When Irene, then pregnant, discovers the liaison, Bob publicly spurns Molly in an attempt to appease his wife's anger while Beatrice orders her out of the house in rage. In a surprising turn, just minutes before Molly leaves the house, Irene, unable to tolerate once more the evidence of her husband's indecency, condemns him harshly. An eye-opener both for Molly and for Beatrice, this reaction changes the moral balance of the play, leaving the story almost open-ended but with

the female characters possessed of a new awareness and with individual responsibilities redistributed according to a certain feminist reasoning.

By including a wayward female in the gallery of her middle-class heroines, Crothers diverged from the contemporary representations of fallenness and leaned toward those authors that Peter Brooks calls the "social melodramatists." These authors, Brooks writes, produce melodramas of manners that "refuse any metaphysical reduction of experience and refuse to reduce their metaphorical enterprise to the cold symbolism of allegory." Engaging in "the play of ethical mind," these playwrights blur the boundaries between vision and document: they "make vision lurid enough so that it releases vision," or better, "they make vision document and document vision."[56] In *Ourselves*, Crothers merges American "documents" and feminist "visions." The play certainly was documentary since the author visited the Bedford State Reformatory for Women several times to root her tale in reality, and used prostitutes' testimony as raw material for her dialogue. Exploring ground that was at the time trod only by investigators, journalists, and social workers, Crothers's purpose had a different scope. Despite its quasi-naturalist documentary technique, the play avoided the sense of inevitability that naturalism entailed because Crothers focused on capturing elements of change from the observation of real life. Her documentary effort bespoke her commitment to realist drama's participation in a cultural evolution that, almost two decades later, she defined as the finest development that the theater could undergo, namely the certainty that "however good or bad the thing in the theater [is], you may know it has happened out there, in reality, before it even got to the stage."[57] Beyond her naïve proclamations that the theater should mirror reality, the staging of *documented* life marked the author's participation in "an enormous act of construction to reorganize . . . and control the social world."[58] "Going real" in the composition of a white slavery play involved, for Crothers, putting women's voices at the center of the prostitution discourse. Since, both on the stage and in society, the serious discussion of such topics usually belonged to authoritative male figures, this choice amounted to advocating the feminization of reform, and celebrated the erosion of the control exerted by male society on female morality.[59]

In the late 1990s, drama historian Patricia Schroeder used Crothers for her case against a certain feminist aversion to realism, arguing that Crothers's "hybrid realism" was in fact most suitable to the expression of women's issues.[60] Up to the third act, *Ourselves* bears the appearance of a more conventional play, ending as it seems to with the rhetorical annihilation of the lost girl. By hinting at this dramatic convention and briskly divorcing it with a final act suggestive of an alternative social order, Crothers redirects the attention and sympathy she secures from her middle-class audience to critical heights. Following Fredric Jameson's notion of genre as social contract,[61] the Broadway drama and the prostitution play can be respectively considered the genre and subgenre that coded the expectations of spectators, as well as their moral and epistemological position. The subversive bent that Crothers imparts to the normative structure of the Broadway melodrama was subtle enough to avoid censorship; yet her coordination of these formal choices with the woman question as a thematic paradigm of historical change conveyed a more radical message than other more indignantly received works. Strategically, this complex connection to the audience pivoted on Crothers's hijacking of the male gaze.

THE POLITICS OF LOOKING AND THE RECIPROCAL GAZE

Since the late sixties, American feminists have been exploring the representation of female sexuality in the arts, questioning extant theories of subjectivity and textuality, of reading, writing, and spectatorship.[62] Developing Laura Mulvey's insights on the economy of "looking" in cinema,[63] Ann Kaplan encouraged women to wonder if and how "visual narratives could structure things so that women own[ed] their gaze." As an afterthought, she added: "If this were possible would women want to own the gaze?"[64] In less theoretical language but with germane distress, at the end of the nineteenth century, the famous American actress Mary Shaw explicitly lamented that "the woman's point of view was usually not respected by manager, producer or actor." This failing, she argued, resulted in the appearance on stage of heroines who "talk and act not as real women would, but as men think that

women ought to talk and act."[65] Ellen Donkin's study of early Anglo-American theater marks this observation as emblematic of an important and often untold aspect of the history of women and performance. What was missing, Donkin argues, was a story chronicling various attempts to own the gaze, or at least redirect the male gaze in all areas of the theater.[66]

Rachel Crothers decidedly wanted to own that gaze. Throughout her career she was often simultaneously playwright, director, costume designer, stage designer, and casting director, as well as lead actress in at least one of her professional productions and in many of her early works.[67] Regularly putting a great deal of effort into every detail of every play, Crothers advanced her theory that the well-trained playwright was the best director of her own play, at least if one wanted to retain all the "subtle qualities" of a work.[68] This approach of a woman making work the defining trait of her personality has even until quite recently been perceived, if not as mannish, at least as "queer."[69] Though freewheeling speculations about her gender identity hardly add clarity to the reception of Crothers's work, her strenuous dedication to playwriting as a "profession" constitutes a foil for her treatment of women's issues—and female careers in particular. In the fragments of her unfinished autobiography, *The Box in the Attic*, dating from 1953, Crothers juxtaposes images of her mother entering a medical career in her early forties with images of herself at four, also preparing for a professional future. In the silent shadow of her mother's setting off for a groundbreaking entrance into a male-dominated profession, Crothers reportedly arranged her pliable paper dolls in little plays that she created, seeing to it that "the ladies became absolutely the people they were supposed to be."[70] This reminiscence constructs a life predicated on uncommon talent, hard work, and unflagging determination, a life where the private and the professional suffer no separation, merged as they are in the unremitting dedication dictated by boundless ambition.

As an adult, although she advocated an experimental theater free from economic pressure, Crothers attributed her mainstream success to her professionalism and considered the commercial theater to be qualitatively superior to the amateurish productions of people drowning

their “dreams and ideals,” in incompetent craftsmanship.[71] In the 1910s, as Abramson reports, articles about “lady playwrights” were often placed on the society page. Crothers herself, apparently annoyed at being interviewed as a woman playwright rather than as a playwright tout-court, tartly recognized that entering that profession required a strength that most women did not have, but that she, not being “most women,” could muster.[72] If female authorship was uncommon, female spectatorship was increasing steadily, a development already observed in the mid-1890s, and particularly evident in the matinée shows.[73] Yet as Mulvey and Kaplan, among others, observed, the melodramas that women liked presented overtly male perspectives that structured general taste and the trajectories of reception with increasing rigidity.[74] Addressing this contradiction, Crothers’s prostitution piece sabotaged the voyeuristic appeal of white slavery plays by doing away with brothel scenes completely. Her production opened instead with a reform home and its inmates.

The exclusively female space of the reform home recreated on stage an important shift of the Progressive Era, that is, the development of civic maternalism into the feminist projects most famously symbolized by Jane Addams’s Hull House. Yet an uncommon acumen of analysis allowed Crothers to address the complications of class implicit in the rhetoric of the tutelage of fallen women with a rare lucidity. In this context, she depicted the reciprocal resistance to crossing class lines that characterized both sides of the reformer/reformed relationship. In the play, in fact, affective empathy is developed easily only between working-class women, namely between Molly and Mrs. Wilson, the Barringtons’s head housekeeper. As a mediating figure, Mrs. Wilson is deeply loyal both to Molly and to her employers. This capacity makes her the *trait-d’union* between upper-class ladies and the lost girl, as well as the material executor of reform work: she is the one who physically saves Molly from her former boyfriend when he comes to drag her away, and who supervises the girl’s spaces of autonomy within the home. Almost echoing Miss Carew’s invocation of experience, Mrs. Wilson claims that she can understand the girl’s situation better than anybody else because she “has worked with [her] two hands” (Act 2.19) since she was a child.

In such an apparently inconsequential reference, the viewer is reminded of the embodied care without which reform efforts fail—a form of care that Molly terms "human" and that needs to complement a reformative approach too often based on detached observation.

Significantly, to emphasize the relational complexity inherent in acts of "observation," Crothers foregrounds the primacy of the female gaze in the opening of the play. As the curtain first rises, two inmates are engrossed in looking out the window. Their look constructs for the audience an unseen attractive young man:

> Florence: (*Looking out the window kneeling on an armchair)* Pipe [*sic*] the machine. It's as big as a house. Look at the chauffer. Some guy (*waving her hand*). Hello, kid.
> Harriette: (*Standing beside Florence*) Stop that. Somebody will see you.
> . . .
> Florence: You ain't got no nerve at all lately. What's the matter with you? Bye-bye cutie!
> . . .
> Miss Carew: They have probably been looking out the window at your chauffeur. . . . Yes, I can tell it by the way he is looking in. (Act 1.2)

Although these girls may be used to soliciting—which explains the "nerve" defining their character—Florence lavishly indulges in a scopophilic activity with no connection to any economic interest. The "kid" is summoned and dismissed at her will, instantly consumed and vaporized by her sensorial evaluations and fleeting fantasies. If Harriette expresses the fear of being seen (behaving inappropriately), Florence exerts vision both as the faculty to freely direct her gaze and as the right to decide how and how long to be seen. Her openness to appraisal is precisely timed by the waving of her hand; the same temporal slot defines the existence of the chauffeur, left to helplessly dangle in a vacuum after she is gone. Despite the boy's efforts, the male gaze is scripted as unable to recreate the desired female presence, and is bound to die out on the empty window or on the stern matron. This apparently

simple scene overturns the perspective that had conventionally framed prostitutes on the stage through male eyes. The enthusiastically received social play *Salvation Nell* by Edward Sheldon provides a telling example of this convention.[75] Also touching on the relationship between prostitution and reform, Sheldon's play opens with a bar scene that the stage directions describe as eminently "atmospheric." At the announcement of an imminent brothel raid at Madame Cloquette's, the bar patrons are instantly excited by the impending "free vaudeville" as the prostitutes will be marched down the main street toward the police station. The audience never sees the women, whose imminent appearance is repeatedly anticipated and whose parade is only conveyed through the consuming looks and rowdy comments of the excited men.

As Katie Johnson observed, the raid scene is indicative of the "paradoxical mimetic space" that prostitutes occupied in Progressive theater and in Progressive concerns because "they captivate the central plot even when they are absent."[76] In *Salvation Nell*, this play, whose bar scene also influenced O'Neill's opening of *Anna Christie*, the function of the theater as a regulatory site in which a code of sexual propriety is communicated to the public overrides any attempts at social analysis. Ironically, the redundancy of reformative language exposes its own thinness and ineffectiveness, parodied as it is in the lustful idiom of the onlookers, replete with sarcastic pity and exhortations "to be good." Beyond a quick hint at Nell and her prostitute friend Myrtle having endured intolerable conditions in the garment industry, no critique of the causes of prostitution is offered. The individual responsibility of the woman in crisis is highlighted as the real determining factor of salvation or degeneracy. Seen as a dual character, Myrtle and Nell overtly deploy a madonna/whore paradigm that seems to exhaust all feminine possibilities.[77]

Using the economy of looking to interpret different treatments of the reformer/reformed dyad, it becomes clear that Sheldon's and Crothers's plays reveal the entrenchment of gender hierarchies in the mechanism of reform. In *Salvation Nell* the first agent of reform to appear is Hallelujah Maggie, a Salvation Army activist who comes to Sid's joint with the specific intent of saving the still untainted Nell from a

meretricious life. Later in the play, the spectators learn that Maggie did not act of her own free will, but instead according to the precise instructions of Major Williams, a male leader in the movement, who had caught sight of Nell in the street and, enthralled by her appearance, had immediately sent for her rescue. Quite equivocally, in Major Williams's speech the words of salvation melt into the words of desire to the point of becoming inseparable: "I have wanted you for eight years now" he says while trying to belatedly declare his passion to Nell; but he immediately dilutes that statement with spiritual metaphors that confusedly mask his yearning. Only in the third act does he find the courage to utter "I love Captain Nell," thus redefining his transformation of Nell as a convoluted plan to rescue, shape, and conquer the person who has been, from the very beginning, coveted as an object of desire, and only subsequently of reform.

In *Ourselves* the two reformers—the experienced Miss Carew, who runs the reform home, and Miss Barrington, the beginner—analyze the topic of reform for the audience using a binary opposition of idealism versus practicality. In this way, Miss Barrington's abstract intention to "make over [a fallen girl] into a good woman" is corrected by Miss Carew, who recommends the need for the reformer go through "a tremendous personal experience" before hoping to exert any influence on someone else (Act 1.4). The theme of the empathetic relationship between reformer and reformed is delayed in the plot: Miss Barrington's first contact with her future protegée is, once again, an unseen watching (Act 1.5). While the prospective reformer observes from a sheltered vantage point, the girls rush into the shabby drawing room not as the shrieking horde evoked by Sheldon, but rather as an alternative family of wayward girls, diverse in age, appearance, and temper, busy relieving their boredom, which is "the hardest thing we [reformers] have to fight" according to Miss Carew. The girls dance, play the piano, sing ragtime "in a loud way with a great deal of swing and spirit," and fight over their internal hierarchy, a structure that reflects not only the primacy of beauty and style but the importance of self-respect. To restore some of the ethnic complexity to the phenomenon of urban prostitution, the first act also includes an aside in which Beatrice entertains a conversation with Lena, a twenty-year-old from Sweden who has undergone

abduction, torture, and sexual enslavement. Lena's five years of American life have taught her that, at the bottom line, a pimp's protection is better than the police's. In spite of the frequent didactic moments, the first act—with its catfights, music, and Molly's attempted escape—was perceived as the most entertaining one, after which, at least for the spectators of the Lyric Theater in New York, the story was followed in absorbed silence.[78]

For a combination of reasons—including the failed support of the Drama League and the unfortunate timing of the show in a season too replete with the white slavery theme—*Ourselves* had a mere twenty-nine runs on Broadway.[79] The failure of an admittedly well-written play on a very popular topic raises questions about the deeper reasons that led the show to close early. As Johnson has proposed, subverting the predictable brothel drama formula was possibly too daring a move,[80] especially considering that the middle-class ladies for whom it was apparently written would resist identifying with the protagonist, Molly, and would find it too painful to openly recognize the emotional core of the play, Irene, as their double. The tepid reception at the Lyric Theater, however, was offset by one particularly significant off-Broadway performance that Crothers directed at the female Reformatory at Bedford Hills, presenting the play to the very girls she had observed during the work's gestation. Despite its being a single performance, this event is especially revealing because the reasons for its great success at Bedford were probably the obverse of its failure on Broadway. More than one review reported the enthusiastic response of the inmates and what the *New York Times* called a "strange realism," that is, an emotional reaction on the part of the audience so powerful as to affect the performance itself:

> The 300 who saw the play recognized it at once as a picture of their own lives. . . . The response to every shadow of meaning in the play affected the players so strongly that many of their lines were unfinished, and they actually sobbed as they took refuge behind the curtains that formed the side wings. This gave a strange realism

to their acting, and the spectators of audience and players were deeply moved.[81]

Most dramatic theorists agree that the aesthetic distance separating the performance from the viewers provides, among other things, emotional protection, so that the audience can respond to the play all the more intensely because of its awareness of the play's fictionality.[82] In this case, the play's singular perspective and the audience's exceptional standpoint renders that distance a space of ultimate emotional freedom, to the point that the affective wave pouring forth from the Bedford girls pierces the fourth wall with vehemence. Even the notoriously cool Crothers, who had planned to leave after the play had begun, remained there till the end, overcome by emotion. The interplay of performance and reception generated a pathos that manifested itself in tears and concretized the "potential reciprocal gaze [that] has been considered part of the 'unique' province of live performance."[83] As the weeping of the author bears witness to the affective power of the theater and to its autonomy as an expressive medium, the tears wept by the actors in response to the audience's feedback find their way into a political process grafted onto the ephemeral side of the theatrical event, but crucially significant with respect to the raising of social awareness across class lines. Caught in a crossfire between the real and the representational and viewing themselves in the bodies of women of a higher class, the Bedford girls experienced a relationship that Peggy Phelan would call "marked": that is to say, an encounter that is "unequal" but "nonetheless summons a hope of reciprocity and equality."[84] In the "authenticity" of the wayward character, the wayward audience experiences an Aristotelian *anagnorisis* (recognition, realization, but also discovery) though without *catharsis*, because there is no tragic flaw to be purged, but rather a new dignity that comes to life.

RECOGNITION AND EMOTIONAL LABOR IN REFORM WORK

Given the peculiarity of the Bedford Reformatory as a "place of performance" and a "place of reformance," the process of recognition

and equalization afforded by *Ourselves* reveals a further dimension of live performance that is common to a certain dramaturgical style and to women-led styles of reform in the Progressive Era. This dimension is the realm of emotional labor and its administration in activities based on or conducive to social exchange. I wish to dwell a bit more on the actresses performing at Bedford to explain this analogy and to highlight how, within the reformatory, the wayward women on the stage represented, more than an "embodied theme," almost an embodied method.

Becoming responsive almost to the point of vulnerability to the reaction of their audience, Crothers and her cast blurred the line between theatrical acting, based on feigning, and deep acting, based on feeling. Deep acting here should not be understood, in a pre-Stanislavski manner, as a method through which the actresses almost deceived themselves into being real reformers and real underworld girls. I use it to better describe the "strange realism" of topic and feelings that made the cast one with the reformatory inmates. After the show, this connection was sealed through a ritual of homage. The stage occupied by Crothers's cast was the same stage on which the inmates had performed *The Pirates of Penzance* only the night before. Many of the girls were still wearing carnations from a bunch that had been given to their *prima donna* after the previous night's play. At the end of the performance of *Ourselves*, the girls presented these same carnations to Grace Elliston, the actress who played Molly. In this offering, the girls function not as a consuming audience—a role that was given to them both in the text of *Salvation Nell* and of *Ourselves*—but rather as peers, fellow performers. In accepting the reconstituted bouquet, Elliston becomes the inmates' prima donna, a sister in vocation, spearheading their role as culture makers.

Only in the mid-thirties was a similar closing of the distance between audience and performers registered again. The one-act agitprop *Waiting for Lefty*, a product of the political-theatrical context of 1934, brought overnight fame to its young author Clifford Odets.[85] This notoriously occurred not so much for the play's intrinsic quality, but for the particular identification and response it elicited in the viewers, who all joined the actors in the famous closing cry "STRIKE STRIKE STRIKE"—

an imperative that would persist, as the genre intended, even after the audience left the theater.[86] In spite of its superior dramaturgical complexity and different intent, *Ourselves* can be said to prefigure some elements of the most effective agitprops, at the very least in its being performed for a "wayward audience." Furthermore, as with *Lefty*, the action toward that recognition should instigate is metaphorical because as with Aristotelian catharsis, the moment of communion substitutes for *direct* action and makes it unnecessary. What remains cogent is the *indirect* action, that is, the process of coming to awareness for women on both side of the class divide, a process that in Bedford occurs in the emotion-swept theater, and in the play, quite symmetrically, involves multiple moments of cross-class recognition. Not secondarily, these moments reveal how, to be successful, the practice of reform must include deep and potentially soul-changing "emotional labor" in addition to rational educational work. As for "deep acting," I steer slightly away from the current definition of "emotional labor" that I use neither with reference to its modern commodified notion, nor as the perfunctory display of observable feelings sold for a wage. In the early 1980s Arlie Hochschield famously distinguished this management of feelings from the same act performed in private, calling the latter "emotional work." Given the peculiarly intimate nature of embodied care, in *Ourselves* the two necessarily intertwine and overlap, calling for the same coordination of mind and feeling and drawing on the same "source of self" honored "as deep and integral to . . . individuality."[87]

The development of the character of Beatrice is particularly telling in this respect. A reformer who lives in her head and understands the world through the conceptual logic of the intellect, Beatrice is the one woman who infringes the male territory of moral regulation on men's own terms and therefore relies on reasoning and rhetoric to learn, teach, and drive her points home. Despite her enlightened vision, Beatrice fails, for example, first to foresee and then to understand Molly's relation to Bob, because she thinks of her handling of the girl in terms of management rather than in terms of experience. Highly reminiscent of Frank Ware in *A Man's World*, Beatrice pursues her dreams of a better society with a similar—for that time "masculine"—

determination. Her plan of saving girls from the streets and of seeing one single standard of morality enforced requires, as in Frank's case, a reliable woman who can become her right hand. Frank's salvation project centers on Clara, a homely artist who wished she could be "pretty and bad . . . have [her] fling and die."[88] Frank makes the same offer to Clara that Beatrice makes to Molly: to help run a rescue home. Since Molly is already "pretty and bad," the tension between the two women moves on to the necessity of physical love, a priority that Molly refuses to renounce: "and what will I be doing all the rest of my days? Don't you expect me to ever see any kind of man?" At that point in the play, Beatrice can respond to such exigencies only in abstract, conceptual terms, as revealed by the disembodied relationship she entertains with her fiancé Collins. From this uncharismatic man, she determines nonetheless to extract the "power and influence" to allow her to implement her projects; in short, she strives to acquire the authority of his sex. In explicitly requesting the cooperation of male "power" to do her work, Beatrice seems to be providing a corrective to the earlier play's conclusion that "this is a man's world," but the reaction she obtains from her fiancé does not differ in substance from Frank's fiancée's statement that "you haven't got at the social evil in the real sense. You couldn't tackle that, it's too big for you."[89] In a sense, this dismissive piece of conventional wisdom rings true in Beatrice's case: if the "social evil" is, as it is for Molly, inseparable from the girl's vitalistic self-determination, then the reformer's lack of emotional openness to the diversions this impulse entails makes reform "too big for her." Attached to a quasi-manly rationalistic vision of reform, but lacking a man's experience of the world, Beatrice is incapable of investing the emotional labor—the deeply felt understanding that Mrs. Wilson possesses—that would persuade Molly and, in the moment in which the failure of her endeavor seems to be definitive, she bursts into an uncontrollable wrath. The violence of her reaction manifests not only Beatrice's inability to comprehend Molly, but also her ineptitude in managing her own feelings: overwhelmed by rage, she repeatedly throws Molly to the floor, shrieking uncontrollably. This ungovernable anger, though, is functional in mobilizing Beatrice's capacity to understand realities that exceed her rational world.

In the final act, in fact, Beatrice comes to a belated understanding of her indirect complicity in causing Molly to lapse with her brother. Prompted by Irene's condemnation of Bob, she speaks up with new and deeper words, granting Molly the complete recognition she had always withheld while attending to the girl as a project, rather than a person. In receiving apologies from a woman of a higher class, Molly realizes, for the first time, her fullness as a human being: "I never thought I was a real human being to you before. I always thought you was just experimenting on me" (Act 4.10). The stage directions, generally succinct, here command an embrace: the distant Beatrice, who had only touched the girl to hit her, places her arms around Molly's shoulder as the latter declares that something "new" has been put into her. This transformative touch, transformative for both women, contrasts with the idea of "social science" that Molly criticized: while she was feeling part of an experiment, albeit pleasant and potentially successful, she could not change her perception of self, but only refine her outer ways. In other words, being "managed," instead of being "in relation," did not make her a more mature and autonomous person, but rather led her to an even weaker position. For her part, Beatrice is unable to realize that relation until she gives in to fury, that is to say, until she comes into touch with her emotional self. By allowing herself to act on the impulse of a negative emotion, and then correcting herself with a newly found empathy, Beatrice realizes a breakthrough in her rigid conception of reform work, and shows that embodied care often proceeds through trial and error. In this way, rationalistic notions of reform based uniquely on social management and legislation, as well as simplistic approaches relying on "cold intimacies" such as those critiqued in *Uncle Tom's Tenement*, are both set aside for the adoption of a model in which mutual recognition and the messy emotional labor necessary to achieve it are equally included. As Crothers shows, by embedding these emotional workings in the script and eliciting them, albeit unexpectedly, in the Bedford audience, this transformative dynamic finally takes place. The reformer and the reformed, the New Woman and the white slave, work together as a dyad, the one reflecting herself into the other, and each discovering a new interior strength in this mirroring.

This mutual emotional development takes Molly from a state of professed ignorance ("I didn't know what I did") to wisdom ("I'd like to tell every girl on earth what I know now")—all in a dozen lines. Molly's final words crown her abrupt awakening with a declaration of independence: "I can't stay shut up no more. I want to stand on my own feet. I want to be alone and feel safe, I want to trust myself. . . . If I can't go straight by myself now—you never can make me" (Act 4.10). This proclamation does not imply a commitment to purity or to a more orthodox heterosexuality, but rather a commitment to the practice of knowledge. If measured only against the girl's sometimes inarticulate speech, the change comes as unexpected, but it acquires wider significance when read in the context of processes of cognition that operate partly beyond the intellect—processes of awakening that also involve not only Beatrice, but also Irene, the betrayed wife. As with Molly, for Irene the effects of this process emerge in the act of seeing Bob for the callous womanizer that he is and consequently deciding to "stand alone."

Quite interestingly, one contemporary reviewer suspected that Irene may not keep her word and take the man back.[90] The text does not provide hints to this effect, and we cannot tell whether this suspicion arose from the reviewer's perception or from the performance. Whereas the printed word is insufficient to confirm or dispel this hypothesis, we can infer that the reviewer reflected the type of "emotion work" that a wife of the time would be expected to perform: acceptance of the status quo and endless forgiveness. Because Crothers chooses to leave the ending focused on Molly's future, rather than on the Barrington household, part of the Broadway audience felt authorized to see Irene as "surface acting" when she reacted against her husband and looked forward to returning her to the lopsided familial stability they knew from most bourgeois marriages. But in the slight dissonance between these expectations and the direction taken by the play lies the lingering doubt that opens up the possibility for the upper-class wife to be "reformed" as well, and become a more sentient and responsible member of society.

BODIES OF REFORM

As in *Salvation Nell*, what remains largely unproblematized in *Ourselves* is the economic responsibility of middle-class women with respect to their working-class sisters. Nowhere in Crothers's plays does a cry emerge as acutely critical as Bayard Veiller's denunciation of the "woman's war on women" that is being fought in the marketplace, and owing to which one can "find women on the streets, who have been driven there by the relentless energy of other women, who want cheap things."[91] However the existence of an internecine woman's war is acknowledged in *Ourselves* when Beatrice underlines the class connotation of the pronoun "*ourselves*" as a memento of the reformers' complicity in perpetuating sexual exploitation when they focus on moralizing girls rather than the men of their class.[92] Given the emphasis that the play places on the emotional labor that hinders or promotes the change further attention to the emotional language developed on stage, allows us to perceive additional extra-textual implications located in the possibilities of the performing body. Turning to the corporeality of the character of Irene, for example, allows us to investigate the connection between the white slave and her counterpart, the married lady, exploring the expressive possibilities that other scripts hardly ever offer in such detail. What the characters *say* does not exhaust what they *convey*. In the same way, what they learn is not only found in their declarations and in their conscious body language: although the catalog of corporeal gestures is *per se* irretrievable, in this play its centrality emerges from the script, both in some classic devices of bodily symbolism and in the development of a sensorial idiom invested with epistemological significance.

This sensory idiom subtly supplements the "preaching" that usually clarifies the political content of some actions. My focus on the bodily supplement brings together dramatic analysis and reform discourse to elicit an interpretation that may or may not have been contemplated by the author, but that, in this particular play, is stimulated by the contrast between the positions voiced by the reformers and the resistance by the vital instinct of youth. This instinct was particularly potent in independent girls of the lower classes, as bourgeois women were more systematically socialized into a docile existence. Because the corporeal

vocabulary is inflected by class, the analysis of the way in which *embodied* rather than *verbalized* thought operates for different women in the play reveals subtle nuances of the generational and class antagonisms underlying the feminization of reform. From this perspective the play dramatizes insights gained by the female reformers engaged embodied care as well as what they overlooked, namely the "human reasons" that doomed to failure an education—or a re-education—based on the performance of domesticity. In short, Crothers's aesthetic rendition produces a synthesis of the anti-prostitution positions of Jane Addams and Walter Lippmann, suggesting that "storm and stress" can be signs of social and personal development rather than mere vestiges of a primal evolutionary past that progress should leave behind.

Furthermore, the expressiveness of the "non-speaking" body is an important feature of female professionalism in the theater, where it is invested with crucial significance. Whereas "preaching" refers to a predominantly male oratorial tradition, "body language" had been traditionally used in the theater as a specifically female language. In theoretical terms, the special relationship of women to the performative has been read as a consequence of women's not being endowed with the privilege of uttering performative speech acts—that is, spoken words with contractual effect—especially given the fact that women were, too often, the object of the contract.[93] According to Shoshana Felman, the dichotomy between "speaking male bodies" and "mute female bodies" is the very essence of the historical "scandal" addressed by feminism. In the theater, the consequences of this dichotomy can be detected in a specifically female tendency to move performance from the grammar of (spoken) words to the grammar of the body—a move that is not to be understood as an overturning of the dichotomy but rather as a motion along a continuous axis of contiguity and displacement.[94]

Some of the basic elements of this associative grammar are patently employed by Ibsen, and his devices find direct correspondence in Crothers's play, especially as far as dancing is concerned. As Nora's famous tarantella in *A Doll House* demonstrates,[95] dancing is as significant for Ibsen as it is for Crothers in *Ourselves*, where it becomes a

mesmerizing ritual that Molly performs alone from the very first scene, to foreshadow her final decision to "dance alone." The tarantella has its roots in a ritual dance that someone bitten by a poisonous spider would perform—even alone, as if possessed—to attract the pity of Saint Paul, who should consequently bestow grace and free the dancer from the venom's influence. As Italian anthropologist Ernesto De Martino has theorized in his groundbreaking studies of tarantism in the Italian South, the dancing body, acting as if of its own volition, produces a spectacle that compels the attention of both the community and the sacred forces, thus expressing and combatting, in a Heideggerian sense, a crisis of presence.[96] Molly's crisis is related to her feeling just as out of place in Miss Carew's faded drawing room as at the Barringtons's, but also to the fact that her present condition is filled with the frustration of being deprived of self-determination. In De Martino's firsthand study of about fifteen people who declared themselves victims of the mysterious spider that forced them, at the anniversary of the first bite, to engage in the exhausting and financially devastating ritual dance known as *taranta*, most were young women characterized by a condition of sentimental unhappiness or sexual repression. Molly is, in a sense, sexually restless, albeit not repressed. Furthermore, by repeatedly attaching herself to men who mistreat her, she repeats the first "bite" of familial abuse that she only confesses, in mid-play, to Wilson: "I never told her we had a boarder, an Italian, and my mother tried to throw me in with his board. They thought I would stand for that because I was a kid, but I was wise and got out—and found a job—but you can't live on three dollars a week" (Act 2.19).

But Molly's dancing is also, in an Ibsenesque manner, a burst of vitality that both seduces and threatens the upper classes. Her graceful moves attract Beatrice, who immediately decides to be her Pygmalion, even though she has seen her picking a violent fight with another inmate. At the end of the third act, the scene repeats itself with another hidden observer, Beatrice's brother Bob, who responds immediately with his own ritual of seduction. In light of Bob's predatory attentions, dance emerges even more clearly as a sexual metaphor and symbolizes that potent instinct to which Miss Carew attributes the main responsibility

for girls' entrance into the life of vice. As she explains to Beatrice, "wretched homes, ignorant parents, all that enters into it, but the reason, back of it all, is that the sex attraction is the strongest thing in the world and if people aren't taught what to do with it, they'll go wrong" (Act 1.12). In Beatrice's interpretation, to teach "what to do with it" translates into the quotidian bodily exercise of method and restraint to which she commits Molly, from strenuous training in penmanship—rather than writing—and in voice training—rather than singing. These clear figurations of the normalizing efforts of middle-class reformers consist in unflagging repetitions of disciplined, segmented acts of surface acting that posit the body as the primary learner of spiritual and intellectual control. Yet Molly's body escapes regulation via the utterance of subliminal expressions and through the emission of bodily signals that manage to communicate with other women in the play with whom verbal communication is proscribed, hampered, or problematic. Concentrating on Molly's bodily voice, Crothers makes the sensual instincts of young unmarried and sexually experienced women the cornerstone of a modern desiring subject. When Molly breaks up with her shady boyfriend, the prospect of a chaste life is unbearable to her: "I give up my fella. I don't want him, but I want somebody. What am I going to do? . . . Stay here and dry up in this straight jacket of a dress—watching the good people dancin' and makin' love for the rest of my life?" (Act 2.14). Nothing could be more distant from the "consumed body" of Nell in Sheldon's play, desexualized and discolored by the endless work of reform.[97] Quite to the contrary, according to her self-description, Molly is "made of flesh and blood," and through this flesh and blood she thinks, learns, and develops as a human being. Although lacking an agreed-upon vocabulary to name this phenomenon, current scientific research converges toward the idea that the body thinks and that there is a "strongly perceptual character" to intellectual activity.[98] In his posthumous work *Some Problems of Philosophy*, William James reformulated the distinction between concepts and percepts. By stressing how percepts—the phenomenal contents of experience—interpenetrate and meld with concepts, James claimed that neither category, taken alone, was complete: "We need them both, as we need

both our legs to walk."[99] The role of perception in conceptual change is also scripted in *Ourselves* as the privileged way in which Molly and Irene, the two characters who undergo major transformations, come to a new consciousness in their moments of recognition. Molly's conscious corporeality proves infectious: her residence at the Barringtons's improperly triggers Irene's vital instincts and makes this hyper-rational bourgeois wife the central "perceiver" of the play. Early in the second act, Irene resolutely discloses her convictions that prostitution is a necessary evil since "Men are more animal than women and will behave differently." Contextually, she declares herself unbothered by this thought, as long as her husband maintains some decency in submitting to such supposedly inescapable instincts. After one month of cohabitation with Molly, Irene's practical concepts falter as her perception is awakened. During that time she conceives a child and also undergoes an inner transformation that eventually leads her to break her hollow marriage and rebuke the commonsensical argument that men are prone to "animal passion," whereas women are "cold-blooded saint[s]" (Act 3.8). Before Irene can rationalize these principles—which she does only in the last act—her incipient transformation is coded through a heightened sense of smell:

> Irene: I loathe that girl, I can't breathe when she is in the room.
> Bob: What difference does she make to you? I say, will you have a cigarette?
> Irene: No.
> Bob: Why not?
> Irene: There's a subtle insidious something that—that sort of fills the air when she's about. It's as strong, as real as . . .
> Bob: Why do you let a servant get on your nerves like that?
> Irene: Oh, it isn't my nerves, I assure you. . . . I have taken a peculiar dislike to your cigarettes. . . . Yesterday I thought I smelled smoke in the upper hall. I followed the scent and it took me into the side hall, down to the end, growing stronger, to that girl's door. I went in. She was smoking one of yours, with a box on the table.
> Bob: Um, I s'pose all the servants pick them up, more or less. (Act 3.4)

Irene is led by her nose to discover a sexual liaison that has been buried and masked by her attachment to domestic security, the smoke signals long misread by her self-inculcated rational convictions. Her intellectual response to a discovery that her body has already made, and that emerges first through symptoms of asphyxiation, involves a process of cognition that begins in the body long before it emerges in the mind. The interval in-between surely increases dramatic effect, but it also serves to deflect immediate confrontation with her husband. In this delay, "the body embarks on a detour that makes temporal and spatial 'room' for the play of non-conscious thought."[100] Irene in fact undergoes a larger transformation, a shift from the embrace of purely rational constructs to a more embodied perception of reality. In this new framework, maternity is pictured as a status of consciousness, rather than an opportunity for further adhering to the double standard. Furthermore, Irene recognizes herself to be a "strong and healthy animal," but one that can consciously choose loyalty to a companion. This awareness casts Molly as her double rather than her enemy, though a double on the other side of the class divide, within an unequal moral economy. The interpenetration of Molly and Irene's cognitive processes is reinforced by the overlapping of some of their bodily manifestations: if sharpened olfaction is normally associated with being pregnant, and the cigarette scene realistically fits Irene's condition, then another indicator of pregnancy, increased softness, is repeatedly attributed to Molly, perhaps because she is about to give birth to a new self. In a narrative ending characterized more by profusion than precision, Crothers seems to intimate that woman's war on woman can reach a truce if the body of reform is found in a triple female subject that encompasses, in addition to the white slave and the New Woman, also the bourgeois wife.

In acknowledging sexual desires, unexpressed rage, and the diversity of experience, the women of different classes who populate *Ourselves* manage to resolve some of the tensions among them. Understood as an expression of female solidarity, the reflexive pronoun of the title indicates a self-awareness of the plurality of female subjectivities. Whereas Johnson has detailed the contextual and critical

factors that have, in her view, made Crothers's "subversion of the predictable brother drama formula" a box-office flop,[101] I have turned to a close reading of the dramaturgical aspects that have allowed the author to re-invent the transaction between actors and spectators by rewriting the traditional routes of the audience's gaze. The result is a choreography of meaning in which the traditional erasure of female volition is transfigured into a journey toward self-determination and knowledge, an exploration of the possibilities of the acting body, and an anticipation of the primacy of emotional labor in the public service. For Crothers, prostitution is a phenomenon around which a distinctly modern female identity comes to life against the background of a society highly divided over the notion of moral regeneration. Contextually, the wayward subject becomes a transversal mediator. According to the author herself, the female condition was the most significant touchstone for society as a whole, and her extensive dramatic production thematized this belief. Given that *Ourselves* unearthed "symptoms of failure in American society,"[102] some critics have interpreted Crothers's creative parable as a mirror of the changes undergone by the feminist movement from the thriving activism of the 1910s to the difficult and disillusioned times of the 1920s and 1930s.[103] Whereas some feminist scholars have declared themselves disappointed by what they considered to be a betrayal of radical ideals, especially in Crothers's comedies,[104] others have recognized that her finely tuned and sensitive feminism was "packaged in forms that her audience accepted as entertainment." Crothers did after all claim to value her career as a theater professional above all else.[105] In pursuing acute psycho-social analysis through the mode of "bourgeois realism," Crothers contributed to the national theater a "comédie humaine de la femme"[106] whose extent remains hardly rivaled.

NOTES

1. Theresa S. Malkiel, *The Diary of a Shirtwaist Striker* (Ithaca: ILR Press, [1910] 1990), 161.

2. Claudia D. Johnson, “That Guilty Third Tier: Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century American Theaters,” in Daniel W. Howe, ed., *Victorian America* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1976).
3. Timothy J. Gilfoyle, *City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution, and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790–1920* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1992), 157.
4. Marvin Carlson, *Places of Performance: The Semiotics of Theatre Architecture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 110–12.
5. Jonas Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).
6. Rachel Crothers (1878–1958) was the author of about thirty plays, twenty-four of which were produced on Broadway, all under her direction. Over the years she helped to form and lead the Stage Women’s War Relief in response to World War I, the Stage Relief Fund to help theater professionals during the Great Depression, and the American Theater Wing of the Allied War relief during World War II. The latter is the organization that in 1947 instituted the Tony Awards, the most prominent American theater award to this day. In 1930 Ida Tarbell listed her in the *Los Angeles Times* among “the fifty foremost women in the United States.” Throughout her career Crothers lived in New York and, later, in her Connecticut home, Roadside, where she died in 1958. See Walter J. Meserve, “Crothers,” in Barbara Sicherman and Carol Hurd Green, eds., *Notable American Women: The Modern Period (Vol.4)* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), 175; Sandra Gail Teichmann, “Rachel Crothers (1878–1958): Biography,” in *American Women Writers, 1900–1945: A Bio-Bibliographical Critical Sourcebook* (Westport and London: Greenwood Press, 2000); and J. K. Curry, “Rachel Crothers: An Exceptional Woman in a Man’s World,” in Kim Marra and Robert A. Schanke, eds., *Staging Desire: Queer Readings of American Theater History* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2002).
7. The only published monograph on the work of Rachel Crothers is Lois C. Gottlieb, *Rachel Crothers* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1979). Also available is the reference guide by Colette Lindroth and James Lindroth, *Rachel Crothers: A Research and Production Sourcebook* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1995). Two unpublished dissertations have provided useful details: Om Prakash Bali, “The Treatment of Marriage in the Plays

of Rachel Crothers," (Doctoral Dissertation: Miami University, 1979), and especially Zoe Coralnik Kaplan, "Woman in Focus in Major Plays and Productions of Rachel Crothers," (Doctoral Dissertation: City University of New York, 1979). Other useful sources, such as articles or book sections, will be indicated in subsequent footnotes.

8. Rachel Crothers, "Ourselves," unpublished play, 1913. As this book goes into print the play is still unpublished. The page numbers referenced here refer to the numbering of the copy preserved at the Shubert Archives in New York City. For critical assessment of *Ourselves* see Katie N. Johnson, *Sisters in Sin: Brothel Drama in America, 1900–1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 145–56; Brenda Murphy, "Feminism and the Marketplace: The Career of Rachel Crothers," in Brenda Murphy, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to American Women Playwrights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); and Patricia R. Schroeder, *The Feminist Possibilities of Dramatic Realism* (London: Associated University Press, 1996), 61–68.

9. Johnson's *Sisters in Sin* is to date the only book-length work on the topic. Johnson's introduction alone offers a wide overview of the genre's plays and production date.

10. Charles W. Collins, "White Slave Drama," *Inter Ocean*, November 25, 1913.

11. The white slave season of 1913–1914 showed a somewhat erratic application of censorship: of the four cases, two were successfully remounted after voluntary censorship of the brothel scenes, one ended in failure and jail. *Ourselves* escaped censorship.

12. Johnson, *Sisters in Sin*, 63.

13. Ibid., 91.

14. "White Slave Plays Again on Trial," *New York Times*, September 12, 1913.

15. "Arrest of Actress Stops Vice Play," *New York Times*, December 10, 1913.

16. Alison M. Parker, *Purifying America: Women, Cultural Reform and Pro-Censorship Activism, 1873–1933* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 2.

17. Johnson, *Sisters in Sin*, 67. This Anti-obscenity Law was designed to curb the production of "plays of an uncommonly low grade presented in

NYC in the past two years" says the Committee of Fourteen.
18. Robin Bernstein, *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood from Slavery to Civil Rights* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 251.
19. Johnson, *Sisters in Sin*, 140.
20. Annette Kuhn, *Cinema, Censorship, and Sexuality, 1909–1925* (London: Routledge, 1988), 1.
21. Mark Whalan, *American Culture in the 1910s* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 36–38.
22. Kay Sloan, *The Loud Silents: Origins of the Social Problem Film* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 82. See also Kevin Brownlow, *Behind the Mask of Innocence: The Social Problem Films of the Silent Era* (New York: Knopf, 1990), 71.
23. Brownlow, *Behind the Mask of Innocence*, 77.
24. Sloan, *The Loud Silents*, 83–84.
25. The film was apparently the first feature not adapted from a novel or a play to receive a Broadway opening. Brownlow, *Behind the Mask of Innocence*, 77.
26. Ibid., 78.
27. Stamp, *Movie-Struck Girls*, 54.
28. *Variety*, December 26, 1913, 13. As quoted in Brownlow, *Behind the Mask of Innocence*, 82.
29. Shelley Stamp, *Movie-Struck Girls: Women and Motion Picture Culture After the Nickelodeon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 53.
30. Ibid., 89.
31. Ibid., 60.
32. After the changes were made, the Board diminished its involvement with the movie by consigning further censorship decisions to the local authorities.
33. Stamp, *Movie-Struck Girls*, 97.
34. Ibid., 53.
35. About the tradition of melodrama written by women see Sarah J. Blackstone, "Women Writing Melodrama," in Brenda Murphy, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to American Women Playwrights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

36. Quoted in Patricia R. Schroeder, “Realism and Feminism in the Progressive Era,” in Brenda Murphy, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to American Women Playwrights* (Cambridge: 1999).
37. Far from being understood in hierarchical terms, the complex positioning of realism and melodrama within the history of American drama is marked by both oppositions and overlaps. For an exhaustive and current critical assessment of these long-debated issues see Ralph J. Poole and Ilka Saal, “Passionate Politics: An Introduction,” in *Passionate Politics: The Cultural Work of American Melodrama from the Early Republic to the Present* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008).
38. Rachel Crothers, “The Construction of a Play,” in Arthur Hobson Quinn, ed., *The Art of Playwriting: Lectures by Jesse Lynch Williams, Langdon Mitchell, Lord Dunsany, Gilbert Emery, and Rachel Crothers* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1928).
39. On women dramatists and women’s themes in the theater of Progressive America, see Yvonne Shafer, *American Women Playwrights, 1900–1950* (New York: Peter Lang, 1997); Judith L. Stephens, “Gender Ideology and Dramatic Convention in Progressive Era Plays, 1890–1920,” *Theatre Journal* 41, no. 1 (1989); Sharon Friedman, “Feminism as Theme in Twentieth-Century American Women’s Drama,” *American Studies* 25, no. 2 (1983); Judith Olauson, *The American Woman Playwright: A View of Criticism and Characterization* (Troy: The Whitston Publishing Company, 1981); and Sherry D. Engle, *New Women Dramatists in America, 1890–1920* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).
40. Stuart Hall, “Who Needs Identity?” in Paul du Gay, Jessica Evans, and Peter Redman, eds., *Identity: A Reader* (London: Sage, 2000), 17.
41. Brenda Murphy, *American Realism and American Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 13.
42. Gottlieb, *Rachel Crothers*, 19.
43. Murphy, *American Realism and American Drama*, 13.
44. So commented pioneering Ibsenite actress Helena Modjieska. See Robert A Schanke, *Ibsen in America: A Century of Change* (Metuchen and London: The Scarecrow Press, 1988), 9.
45. Crothers received the Chi Omega Award on April 25, 1939. See Coralnik Kaplan, “Woman in Focus,” 2.
46. Crothers, “The Construction of a Play,” 132.

47. See Lindroth and Lindroth, *Crothers: A Sourcebook*, 3–9, 74.
48. Doris Abramson, "'The New Path': Nineteenth-Century American Women Playwrights," in June Schlueter, ed., *Modern American Drama: The Female Canon* (London and Toronto: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1990), 48.
49. See Coralnik Kaplan, "Woman in Focus," 1.
50. See Teichmann, "Crothers: Biography," 82.
51. Quote from *The Nation* in Doris Abramson, "Rachel Crothers: Broadway Feminist," in June Schlueter, ed., *Modern American Drama: The Female Canon* (London and Toronto: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1990), 57.
52. *The Three of Us* (1906) was Crothers's very first professional production followed by *The Coming of Mrs. Patrick* (1906), *Myself Bettina* (1908), *A Man's World* (1909), and *He and She* (1911). See Lindroth and Lindroth, *Crothers: A Sourcebook*.
53. Gottlieb, *Rachel Crothers*, 63.
54. For the controversy with Augustus Thomas who wrote the play *As A Man Thinks* in piqued response to *A Man's World* see Murphy, "Feminism and the Marketplace."
55. Rachel Crothers, "A Man's World," in Judith E. Barlow, ed., *Plays by American Women: 1900–1930* (New York: 1909).
56. Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 22. For a different theoretical reading of melodrama as a genre see Robert B. Heilmann, *Tragedy and Melodrama: Versions of Experience* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1968).
57. Crothers, "The Construction of a Play," 14.
58. Amy Kaplan, *The Social Construction of American Realism* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1988), 10.
59. In an interview in 1910 Crothers declared: "I have convictions, but am not a reformer. . . . I have convictions, I believe every playwright has, or no play could be written. But try to reform the world, to reform men." Reportedly, "her slimmed hand waved away the possibility." Abramson, "Rachel Crothers," 59–60.
60. See Schroeder, "Realism and Feminism in the Progressive Era," and also Yvonne Shafer, "Whose Realism? Rachel Crothers's Power Struggle in

the American Theater," in William W. Demastes, ed., *Realism and the American Dramatic Tradition* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1996).

61. Jameson's model genres are "social contracts between [artists] and a specific public, whose function is to specify the proper use of a particular cultural artifact." Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 106. See a brilliant deployment of such principle on the topic of mid-nineteenth-century French painting in Leila W. Kinney, "Genre: A Social Contract?" *Art Journal* 46, no. 4 (1987).

62. Teresa de Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), 1.

63. Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16, no. 3 (1975).

64. Ann E. Kaplan, "Is the Gaze Male?" in *Women and Film: Both Sides of the Camera* (New York and London: Methuen, 1983), 25. While for Mulvey, as the psychoanalytic substratum of her argument suggests, the problematic of the gaze entails the question of identity, image, and subject formation, here I am borrowing her insights to define the development of a feminist authorial gaze that, from the privileged site of the theater, both endorses and questions specific dynamics of prostitution reform. In this context, the willful control of the gaze on the part of the playwright mirrors women's struggle to "own" the practice of reform outside the sphere of male authority.

65. Ellen Donkin, "Mrs. Siddons Looks Back in Anger: Feminist Historiography for Eighteenth-Century British Theatre," in Janelle G. Reinelt and Joseph R. Roach, eds., *Critical Theory and Performance: Revised and Enlarged Edition* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2007), 318.

66. "In theoretical terms we can formulate it as follows: that the history of women's performance is the history of a struggle for a subject, rather than an object, position in representation." Ibid., 317.

67. She regularly participated as actress in the one-act plays she wrote for her students while working at the Wheatcroft School in New York; but she also played Mrs. Hereford in the play *He and She* in the 1920s.

68. Curry, “Rachel Crothers,” 58.
69. This is the rather surprising rationale that, reinforced by the morbid curiosity about her life as a single woman, motivates her inclusion in books whose titles promise a “queer reading of American theater” or of “lesbians in American Theater.” I am referring in particular to the collections of articles edited by Marra and Schanke in 2002, *Staging Desire*, and to Billy J. Harbin et al., *The Gay & Lesbian Theatrical Legacy: A Biographical Dictionary* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2007).
70. Coralnik Kaplan, “Woman in Focus,” 2.
71. Crothers, “The Construction of a Play,” 133.
72. Interview with Sara Wilson “The Woman’s Angle” in *The New York Evening Sun*, 1937. Undated clip quoted in Coralnik Kaplan, “Woman in Focus,” 21.
73. Humphreys, “Women Bachelor in New York,” *Scribner’s*, 19.5 (1896): 635. Quoted in Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 241.
74. Kaplan, “Is the Gaze Male?” 26.
75. Edward Sheldon, “Salvation Nell,” in John Gassner, ed., *Best Plays of the Early American Theatre: From the Beginning to 1916* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1908).
76. Katie N. Johnson, “The Salvation Lass, Her Harlot Friend and Slum Realism in Edward Sheldon's *Salvation Nell* (1908),” *Theatre History Studies* (2006), accessed September 12, 2013, http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-154692988.html.
77. As mentioned in chapter 2, Edward Sheldon goes beyond this simplistic binary in his play *The High Road*.
78. “If ‘Ourselves’ . . . had been the first rather than the last of the modern vice plays, it would have been a tremendous box office success. It is a drama full of interest up to the moment the final curtains drops on the fourth act. . . . The play is not without laughs, the first two acts being largely given to comedy, but the third and fourth acts are intensely dramatic, and the audience last night was in complete silence during most of those periods in the play.” “Rachel Crothers’s Play ‘Ourselves’ Makes a Plea for an Equal Standard of Morality,” *New York Times*, November 14, 1913.

79. According to Ronald Wainscott, Broadway shows had a target of one hundred continuous performances; forty to eighty runs were considered a modest exploit while fewer than thirty counted as failure. See *The Emergence of Modern American Theater, 1914–1929* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 56.
80. Johnson, *Sisters in Sin*, 146.
81. "Bedford Girls See Their Lives in Play," *New York Times*, December 3, 1913.
82. For an informative survey on the concept of "distance" in dramatic reception see Daphna Ben Chaim, *Distance in the Theatre: The Aesthetics of Audience Response* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1984).
83. Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993), 4. On the valence of tears as an expression of a "non-interpretive approach to art" see MaryAnn Snyder-Körber, "And Susan Sontag Wept: Portraits, Grief, and the Gritty Grain of the Real," in Ulla Haselstein, Andrew Gross, and MaryAnn Snyder-Körber, eds., *The Pathos of Authenticity: American Passions of the Real* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2010).
84. Phelan, *Unmarked*, 2.
85. See Gerald Weales, "Waiting for Lefty," in Gabriel Miller, ed., *Critical Essays on Clifford Odets* (Boston: Hall, 1991), 146–48. For an assessment of Lefty as a working-class agitprop masterpiece see William W. Demastes, *Clifford Odets: A Research and Production Sourcebook* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), 65–68.
86. Clifford Odets, *Waiting for Lefty and Till the Day I Die* (New York: Random House, 1935).
87. Arlie Russel Hochschiled, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (Berkeley: University of California Press, (1983) 2003), 7.
88. Crothers, "A Man's World," 53.
89. Ibid., 23, 25.
90. "Rachel Crothers's Play 'Ourselves' Makes a Plea for an Equal Standard of Morality," *New York Times*, November 14, 1913.
91. "The Playwright Must Pound His Pulpit—Bayard Veiller," *New York Times*, September 29, 1912.
92. Johnson gives an account of the play's working titles and their significance: *The Social Evil*, *The Unwelcome Guest* and *When It Strikes Home*. See Johnson, *Sisters in Sin*, 147.

93. Tania Modleski, “Some Function of Feminist Criticism, or The Scandal of the Mute Body,” *Feminism Without Women* 49, October (1991). As quoted in Peggy Phelan and Lynda Hart, “Reciting the Citations of Others,” in Peggy Phelan and Lynda Hart, eds., *Acting Out: Feminist Performances* (Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 1993), 16–17.
94. Phelan, *Unmarked*, 150.
95. In *A Doll House* the tarantella performed by Nora marks both the high point preceding suicide in Nora’s fantasies and Torvald’s sexual passion. Henrik Ibsen, “A Doll House,” in Brian Johnston, ed., *Ibsen’s Selected Plays* (New York: Norton, [1879] 2004).
96. See Ernesto De Martino, *The Land of Remorse: A Study of Southern Italian Tarantism*, trans. Dorothy Louise Zinn (London: Free Association, [1961] 2005).
97. Nell, who could have made an attractive blonde in a brothel at the beginning of the play, is described as greenish in the face from too much praying. Johnson sees the salvation lass as the modernist counterpoint to the body of the prostitute. Johnson, “The Salvation Lass.”
98. See Melba Cuddy-Keane, “Narration, Navigation, and Non-Conscious Thought: Neuroscientific and Literary Approaches to the Thinking Body,” *University of Toronto Quarterly* 79, no. 2 (2010) and Lawrence W. Barsalou, “Perceptual Symbol Systems,” *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 22 (1999).
99. William James, *Some Problems of Philosophy: Beginning of an Introduction* (New York: Green, [1911] 1916), 52–53.
100. Cuddy-Keane, “Narration, Navigation,” 689.
101. Johnson, *Sisters in Sin*, 146.
102. Olauson, *The American Woman Playwright*, 36.
103. See Schroeder, *Feminist Possibilities*, 61; and Deborah Kolb, “The Rise and Fall of the New Woman in American Drama,” *Educational Theatre Journal* 27, no. 2 (1975).
104. See for example Judith E. Barlow, *Plays by American Women, 1900–1930* (New York: Applause, 1985), xv; and Eleanor Flexner, *American Playwrights, 1918–1938: The Theatre Retreats from Reality* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1938), 245.
105. Murphy, “Feminism and the Marketplace.”

106. Crothers's own definition. See Cynthia Sutherland, "American Women Playwrights as Mediators of the 'Woman Problem,'" *Modern Drama* 21, September (1978).

Chapter 5

Staging Remedies: Doctors, Patients, and the American Plan

Wise women choose their doctor and trust them.
The wisest ask the fewest questions.
—Silas W. Mitchell, *Doctor and Patient*, 1888

More than once in *Ourselves* both Molly and her scoundrel boyfriend refer to reform practices and reform talk as "dope." Presented in the play as a beneficial drug for the evils of society, reform is also subtly addressed as a potion that can benumb the vital instinct. Reinforcing the pharmaceutical metaphor and emphasizing the unstable divide between advantageous and detrimental medical practices, Molly laments the "occupational therapy" she has to undergo for re-education —endlessly addressing correspondence—as conducive to paralysis, rather than to nimble dexterity. Furthermore, the invitations Molly sends refer to "Dr. von Flexner's" talk on "the moral responsibility of the individual towards society" (Act 2.26). The oblique reference to the famous Abraham Flexner, author of the greatly influential 1910 report on medical education, is another hint at the increasingly tight connection in those years between social reform, prostitution discourse, and medicine. This chapter will explore this linkage by discussing some "prostitution plays" that emblematically situate doctors at the center of the plot.

In the second decade of the twentieth century, the conjunction between medicine and reform was historically defined by the convergence of two groups of reformers into one national association dedicated to social hygiene. One group gathered various representatives of the purity and anti-vice movements; the other, animated by a more modern impulse toward public health, consisted mainly of physicians engaged in the eradication of venereal diseases. Not surprisingly, the heterogeneous conversation that was carried on between these two poles, the moral and the clinical, encompassed the Progressive debate

on the double standard and on prostitution. The tensions registered in the theater, at least until the eve of World War I, revealed this shift in matters of morality and social responsibility as well as the increasing professionalization of both social work and the medical field. Traditionally considered the “wild oats” harvested by sexual sinners, syphilis began to receive growing scientific attention toward the end of the nineteenth century. Developments in bacteriology accelerated the formulation of an effective therapy and suggested that syphilis could be considered a communicable disease like any other. This new point of view, together with the influence of a class of doctors who considered moralism and misinformation undesirable Victorian residues, considerably weakened the “conspiracy of silence” that kept the discussion of venereal diseases far from female ears and encouraged ruthless quacks to take advantage of general ignorance. Consequently, even the discussion that pitted advocates of the abolition of prostitution against those who called for its regulation was now shaped by the new perspective of public health. However, the most vocal among the social hygienists recommended prevention through the enforcement of a single, restrictive standard of sexual conduct. Feminist activists, for their part, supported this solution as well, certain that it would solve the problem of “lost women” and eradicate prostitution. In short, medical discourse refreshed the idiom of social purity, but did it really change the way in which the connection between gender roles, morality, and venereal disease was understood? How gender neutral was this campaign for the eradication of physical and social pathologies, and what role did a gendered understanding of the medical profession play in it? And finally, how did brothel drama contribute to the negotiation of these understandings? Turning to the stage for an analysis of the correlation between medicine and reform in the treatment of prostitution can help answer these questions, particularly if attention is paid to the depiction of the wayward woman and to her redefinition according to the language of pathology and contagion.

ENTER SOCIAL HYGIENE

As convincingly argued by Kristin Luker, and supported by the historical research of Allan Brandt and David Pivar, the social movement known as “the social hygiene movement” transformed the treatment of prostitution in the Progressive Era and was a central force in redefining the relationship of sexuality to state authority.[1]

The organization that came to embody this movement was the American Social Hygiene Association (ASHA). Founded in 1913, the group emerged from the amalgamation of two distinct reform persuasions and their respective institutional establishments. Under the guide of Dr. Prince Morrow, the New York physician generally regarded as the father of social hygiene, the ASHA accomplished the formal unification of the purity and sanitarian strands of Progressivism at a time when their interests overlapped, at least as far as the improvement of American moral life was concerned. Yet, their convictions with respect to the handling of the prostitution problem had not always been compatible. Doctors, for example, had traditionally favored regulation over abolition. This position was related to the fact that the interest in venereal diseases and their social consequences emerged in parallel with the rise of public health as a new medical specialty.[2] Since venereal diseases straddled the private and the public because of their association with vice and the yet-unclarified question of their communicability, doctors at mid-century considered prostitution a public health problem rather than a moral issue.[3] For this reason, they supported “regulationist” measures such as the licensing of prostitutes during the Civil War, and, analogous post-war experiments, as in St. Louis.[4]

This attitude, apparently unconcerned with morality, did not make physicians into biomedical technocrats. They certainly valued the independence of their scientific position, but they were also deeply concerned with the social and moral customs that hampered an application of purely medical principles.[5] Thus, as David Pivar put it, “morality, formerly explicit, became increasingly implicit within the pragmatic work of building an urban community.”[6] In this perspective, the emergence of social hygiene spoke to the modernized goals of the purity reformers, who now saw the complete elimination of prostitution as one plank in their vast program for the regeneration of society. As

purity groups were faced with the need to understand complex social problems that encompassed the changing reality of gender relations, they shifted the blame for moral decay from the traditional target, loose women, to male behavior. This concern with male rectitude and an idealistic belief in women's higher moral standing was carried over into the social hygiene movement and became a significant element in the fight against sexually transmitted diseases.[7]

Viewed in the larger context of the Progressive Era, attitudes toward venereal disease reflected the tensions that characterized Progressive reform generally. While the attempt to ennoble their profession through old-regime notions of respectability was still so strong that most doctors found the discussion of syphilis inappropriate, a wing of the medical class, influenced by more positivistic European attitudes, based their professional prestige on the adherence to scientific progress. However, in America even this "positivistic" fringe found it useful to fuel the rhetoric of social panic that purity activists had sparked, because the old element of terror effectively safeguarded professional distinction, and conveniently established among the population a preventive, "socially responsible attitude."[8] The transition of physicians toward abolitionist positions was consecrated by a landmark book: Abraham Flexner's *Prostitution in Europe*, the product of a two-year investigation of European prostitution policies, sponsored by J. D. Rockefeller's Bureau of Social Hygiene.[9] Although the author carefully avoided siding with either regulationists or abolitionists, the inefficient and collapsing regulatory measures he described were received as cautionary tales, while his recommendations for a rationalization of social life as the only certain cure for the social evil, though ambitious, made the book the first standard reference for a diverse camp of anti-regulationists that had so far lacked a central philosophy.[10] In the course of a decade marked by conflicts of opinion, an important portion of the medical profession converged on an attitude toward venereal disease that was fundamentally scientific and secular but also strongly influenced by the conviction that purity of living was essential to the constitution of a functional and healthy society.

"ONE LONG THRILL:" *THE KNIFE*

By 1917, Eugene Walter had become "the man who wrote *The Easiest Way*."[11] The 1909 melodrama, which was praised for its realistic depiction of the life of Laura Murdock, actress and kept woman, functioned as a prologue to the Broadway white slavery season[12] and followed *Paid in Full*, Walter's first stage success, by less than a year. Significantly, *Paid in Full* featured a businessman ready to prostitute his wife to save his career. Nearly a decade later, after having achieved nationwide reputation as a vigorous and innovative author, Walter returned to the topic of urban prostitution with *The Knife* but approached the topic from a completely different perspective.[13] Laying out a number of sensational topics whose unusual intertwinement brought novelty to the plot, the playwright deployed white slavery as a crime so heinous as to justify the reduction of its perpetrators to human guinea pigs. When the play arrived on Broadway, it was produced to celebrate the opening of a new theater, the Shubert-owned Bijou on Forty-Fifth street—a dainty establishment humorously described as "almost too small for such a robust play."[14] Strong the play was: drug abuse, flashlights and struggles on a dark stage, clairvoyance, voodooism, rape, and revenge were only some of the ingredients that provoked either delighted excitement or disapproving horror among the commentators. Before hitting Gotham, *The Knife* had been produced, among other places, in Albany, Poughkeepsie, and Chicago, where it received a number of mixed reviews. Recasting the two protagonists for the New York premiere was a choice highly appreciated by the spectators, who could not help but appreciate the extremely effective acting even when disagreeing with the handling of the subject matter. In New York as well as in Boston, the play always pleased the audiences, if not always the critics, enthralling them with effective dialogue, imaginative situations, and "fiendish candor."[15]

As a thesis play, *The Knife* argued in favor of medical experimentation as a beneficial alternative to the death penalty; as a melodrama, it brought to the stage the "furiously sensational" excitement of a thriller; as a social play, it purportedly responded "to the

parents of the girls who have disappeared in this city [New York] and in others."[16] With regard to the latter element, *The Knife* capitalized on the atrocious death of Ruth Cruger, a white, upper-class New York girl whose disappearance had occupied the press for weeks in the spring of 1917, before her corpse was discovered in the basement of a bike shop.[17] None of the reviewers saw the proposal of practicing vivisection on criminals as more than an occasion for some "blood-curdling" scenes. In the same way, Walter's proclamations that white slavery necessitated intervention in 1917, as it had when he had first learned about it fifteen years before during his stint as a reporter in Seattle,[18] were met with tepid interest when not deemed as completely insincere.[19] Yet even while recognizing white slavery as a residue of the recent past, most reviewers granted that *The Knife* did not "pretend to fill the air with rumors of . . . kidnappers lurking around every corner"[20] and saw the "important," if "unpleasant," and honest, if improbable, melodrama, as a noteworthy product of modern times and concerns.

A "smooth-running theatrical machinery"[21] grafted onto a modern sensibility, *The Knife* is also a melodrama replete with symbolic allusions. The metaphoric resonance of its title, the allegoric potency of its amorally brilliant protagonist, and the eerily psychoanalytic perturbations of its prima donna complicate what was marketed as "a modern justification of the vendetta."[22] The play in fact adumbrates a debate about the professional and ethical profile of the medical class, as well as its role with respect to social evils. Since these themes map the interaction of scientific and reformative discourse that gave birth to social hygiene, it can be argued that *The Knife* deploys medicine, its language, its procedures, and its practitioners as metaphors of the duplicitous nature of reform. The improbable turns of the plot bespeak the tensions underlying the shift toward social hygiene that had taken place during that decisive period. The play features a Virginian prelude: Southern belle Kate Tarleton, orphaned at an early age, gets engaged to the much older Dr. Manning, her legal tutor as well as her father's medical disciple. The following three acts are set in New York, where Kate disappears on one of her first days in town while Manning is at work on a groundbreaking discovery. The private investigation that the

doctor carries out with the help of his female colleague, Dr. Louise Meredith, and her brother Billy leads them to find the girl, heavily drugged, in a white slaver's den, after she has suffered sexual abuse. The girl, completely oblivious to her experience, is made to believe that she has had "some brain troubles," and is immediately sent off to the countryside for a complete recovery. In the meantime, by way of revenge, Manning avails himself of the two slave traders and inoculates them with a deadly infection so that he can experiment with some curative serums. Thanks to this turn, he discovers a revolutionary medication but becomes, at the same time, the object of an investigation stirred by rumors of his penchant for unethical practices. All the characters are gathered together in the last act in which Manning confesses his criminal action, attempting to prevent Kate from learning what fate has befallen her. In the final coup-de-théâtre, the girl recognizes the slave trader and suddenly recalls the forgotten episode. Moved by the spectacle of violated innocence, the assistant district attorney drops all charges against Manning and leaves the young couple to savor their happily rediscovered bliss.

MEDICINE AS METAPHOR OF REFORM

Reconnecting the play to the tradition of white slavery drama, Channing Pollock of *Green Book Magazine* observed that *The Knife* had "all the appeal of *The Lure*, without its prurience."[23] To a certain extent, *The Lure*, George Scarborough's 1913 play,[24] contained in a nutshell some of the themes elaborated in *The Knife*. Not as structurally sophisticated as *The Knife*, Scarborough's work does not weave the discourse of social hygiene directly into the plot, but invests the figure of Dr. Goldberg, an old Jewish physician, with a series of corollary concerns. Dr. Goldberg embodies the disinterested dedication to the cure of the sick that American physicians, well advanced on the path to economic prestige, had already largely abandoned.[25] The disappearing virtues of the Old World are celebrated together with an ideal deontology under the vestiges of the doctor's foreign wisdom. Nonetheless, his excessive empathetic approach and lack of individual ambition distance Dr. Goldberg from that "culture of professionalism" that, as Burton

Bledstein has argued, had been restructuring American society since the mid-nineteenth century. Professionalism functioned according to a "vertical vision" that dismissed both communal and corporate solidarity in favor of social and economic success.[26] In this light, Goldberg's common-sense practice, enclosed in a symbolically "small medicine case" where bland medications are mixed with romantic advice, allegorizes a démodé, if honest, moral consciousness, virtually useless in the modern world.

For this reason, even Goldberg's social vision—with its naïve focus on the urban poor and condemnations of the tycoons' cultural initiatives—sets him apart as a well-meaning amateur rather than as a potential reformer, a layman to whom the overarching logic of metropolitan living, with its politics and power plays, is incomprehensible. With particular reference to prostitution, *The Lure*'s last act evidences Dr. Goldberg's utter lack of potential as a would-be social hygienist and underscores how the decisive battle against white slavery is to be won through the deployment of specialized officers and effective legislation. Accordingly, the Mann Act is named as the legal device that made the arrest of the procurer in the play possible while Bob McAuley, "Government man and white slave specialist," is celebrated as the heroic savior. The prospective marriage between the girl who has kept herself virginal in spite of the circumstances and the representative of the "healthy" faction of the state forces reaffirms the triumph of the paradigm of purity. In the world regulated by these axioms, suicide and death are preferable to defilement, the state invades the house of private citizens to save them from perdition, and humane medicine is virtually powerless.

In the social hygiene age in which *The Knife* takes place, Dr. Manning incarnates "the true type of the up-to-date physician," in the sense that he has "nothing particularly professional about his appearance" but "might be mistaken for an ordinary, shrewd metropolitan business man" (Prelude 1). Self-reliant, ambitious, and mentally organized, Manning is one with his laboratory, the aseptic ivory tower where neurosurgery, bacteriology, and chemistry proceed unhampered by worldly preoccupations. This specifically professional authority is also the element that allows him a superior independence, "not in the name of

an irrational egotism, but in the name of a special grasp of the universe and a special place in it."[27] In keeping with this tendency, the declared ideal guiding Manning is the service of mankind; in the name of such greater good he takes with him the freedom of action he enjoys in his lab when he starts operating on society. Not by chance, Manning's main professional instrument, the surgeon's "knife," is used to improve the course of science as well as to literally excise some cancerous cells from the community. If to Dr. Goldberg the most serious deontological problem concerns exclusively his relation to the patients, Dr. Manning has no dialogic relation with the patients at all. Manning's ethical horizon is less intersubjective than epistemological: "Manning: My dear [he tells Kate right after he has proposed] I'm a little slow in discovering this sort of . . . emotion. My specialty is facts. Kate: And bugs . . . Manning: Yes, and serums" (Prelude 3–4). The surgeon's dedication to a superior technical competence is positivistically unemotional; in contrast, the anti-vivisectionists who oppose him remain part of that broad shift in sensitivity that first started in Britain during the 1790s, and that historians Lynn Hunt and Margaret Jacob have called the "affective revolution."[28] Yet if, at times, in the play the hindering of groundbreaking research in the name of unfounded suspicions seems to echo anti-modernist feelings, the anti-vivisection protest had actually manifested extremely modern concerns by questioning the ethics of human experimentation.[29] Less then a decade before the play, in fact, the Anti-Vivisection league (AAVS) reported unauthorized bacteriological experiments on children in a Philadelphia orphanage,[30] and the outcry that ensued made stricter accountability for medical research a prominent public issue.[31] According to the Shubert Press Department and to the author's own statements, Eugene Walter overtly endorsed the plan to make criminals useful to society in line with the theories that lawyer and scientist John Durand had recently presented before the American Association of Medical Jurisprudence.[32] The seriousness of Walter's commitment to these theories is difficult to assess, and *The Knife* was hardly ever considered as a propaganda play; nonetheless, even if the possibility of handing over the "inmates of the death house at Sing Sing" to "the Rockefeller Foundation" was mentioned only

humorously in the play's review, the semi-serious discussion of punitive vivisection evoked the debates of similar issues offstage, carried out by very earnest social players, namely strong private interests, the medical profession, and the administrators of justice.

While there is no official "white slave expert" in *The Knife*, the realm of justice is embodied by the assistant D. A. George Scott and the attorney-turned-detective Billy Meredith. These professional types are frequently encountered both in factual and fictional treatments of white slavery, where they represent the institutional manifestations of reform work. Scott and Meredith are torn by an interior conflict: although they think of themselves as "cold, methodical machines" (Act 1.18) intellectually and socially equipped for an impartial commitment to the law, their spirits have not completely hardened. Hence, when faced with the shocking brutality of white slavery, they cannot maintain an unaffected adherence to their beliefs. Posited as the supreme horror, white slavery both engenders and justifies their transition into an emergency mode where the methods of justice disquietingly resemble those of criminality. Unlike the Manichaean world of politics sketched out in *The Lure*, the power play in *The Knife* is a delicate diplomatic act, resting on constant negotiations between different groups, all endowed with political clout and a certain vision of a regenerated society. The institutional machine is manned by neither honest nor dishonest operators but is rather constantly reoriented according to the claims of specific constituencies that cannot be ignored, even though condescending to their requests occasionally impedes progress (Act 1.11, 1.12). Quite candidly, Scott reveals that the realization of the Progressive dream of a rationalized state engaged in the support of just causes is dominated by the imposing power of wealth and special interests. At the same time, the idea of science as a source of authority that transcends the favoritism of politics and the corruption of personality is also belied by the admission that medical progress is no different from any other business that flourishes on the basis of corporate capital.[33]

The connection between the ethical core of medical experimentation and the performative potential of white slavery resides in the fact that Manning apparently never fathoms using human subjects

until the moment in which his “murdering” impulse is triggered by the horror of Kate’s rape. On the surface, the fire of revenge leads him to overstep his deontological boundaries; more subtly, the excuse of wounded honor dissipates the Hippocratic principles that boundless ambition had probably already weakened. How strongly to characterize Manning as a Mephistophelian genius might have been a matter of uncertainty for the playwright, even problematizing decisions about the mise en scène. The manuscript on which this textual analysis is based contains a few significant handmade corrections, some of which reveal an eminently dramaturgic, but also conceptual dilemma: if Manning, in spite of his brilliance, were to be perceived as demonic, would the white slavers’ wrongdoings pale in comparison, and would those criminals be regarded with sympathy? And again: had it become clear that Manning was not new to human experimentation, would the system of institutional power that in the end absolves his doings, and that condemns sexual enslavement, be perceived as illegitimate, or at least wedded to the wrong values? Traces of both quandaries run through the play.

In a brief exchange, later crossed out by a nervous pencil, the suspicion is raised that Manning might have used boys and girls as human guinea pigs, and that not all of them had survived (Act 1.12, 1.13). The removal of this passage suggests an attempt to minimize the diabolic aspect of Manning’s personality. Even without the deleted dialogue, other subtler references to the same theme surface uncensored; Dr. Louise Meredith’s exposition of the revolutionary techniques of neurosurgery is a case in point: “Louise: We trepanned to relieve a brain pressure in the hope of gaining a better nervous equilibrium. The child seemed incorrigible to the point of having been declared defective. This may help. Bill: Your discovery Louise? Louise: No, Dr. Manning’s” (Act 1.1–2). The revelation of potentially controversial details by a charming lady doctor rather than by a ranting reformer situates the spectator in the crossfire between the arguments of science and the arguments of sentiment so that also the deontological limitations of the union between medicine and reform are presented in all their complexity. Since Louise champions invasive surgical procedures so passionately as the safest way toward an improved society, it is

harder to formulate a completely negative opinion of the ethics of experimentation. Hers is no tale of horror, but rather a scientific fable where the process leading from diagnosis to regeneration flows uninterrupted. The "incorrigible" subject, far from representing the product of a society gone awry, is simply a diseased organ in the body politic, but an organ that can ultimately constitute a threat to civilization if specialized practitioners do not make scientific as well as social sense of it. Thus the prescription of a rudimentary lobotomy for a restless child presents Manning as the ultimate social reformer whose trepan is the best alternative to the ineffective methods of civic intervention. With fine irony, Walter seems to capture the way in which the course of action indicated by social hygiene points to the resolute suppression of all potential forms of deviance, prostitution among them, rather than to a sustainable restoration of social health.

Maneuvered into an affective detour, the spectators are led to face human experimentation without outcry in the face of Kate's brutal abduction. At this point, Walter is tempted to give his plot "another turn of the screw" and openly indicts the institutions that were usually dominated by reformers. The script in fact points toward the demonstration that the white slaver who just paid with her life is actually a surrogate for the almost unnamable arch-villain, that is, the District Attorney himself. When in the last act Kate recovers her memory, she recalls a rich old man standing in the room at the fortune-teller's house where she woke up from her first coma. The respectable-looking person is probably the one who materially violated Kate, but, having recognized her only too late as a member of his own class, he leaves, desperate with regret (Act 3.46). All clues point to the mysterious person as the senior District Attorney, Scott's father. Not unlike the Committee of Fourteen's complaint that old-school judges were too lenient in applying laws that policed moral libertinage, the play seems to indicate the necessity for a generational renewal in the political machine since, as Louise puts it, "One can't expect to discover any successful treatment for the District Attorney's office" (Act 1.7). And in fact, Scott Jr. brings together an understanding of politics, the capacity for action, and an apparently sound morality, whereas his father backs up the vice trust, indulges in abject pleasures, and only keeps up the appearance of a

public office deeply interested in giving all social constituents their due. The D.A. was not an uncommon presence on the American stage, yet in *The Knife* he eventually fails to materialize, and the final curtain falls without a confirmation of the suspicions that have been raised. There certainly is an element of suspense in this unfulfilled expectation, but is it also legitimate to surmise with the *Times* that an earlier version of the play might have been more courageous, and that Kate might have actually met her defiler, if briefly, at the closing moment.

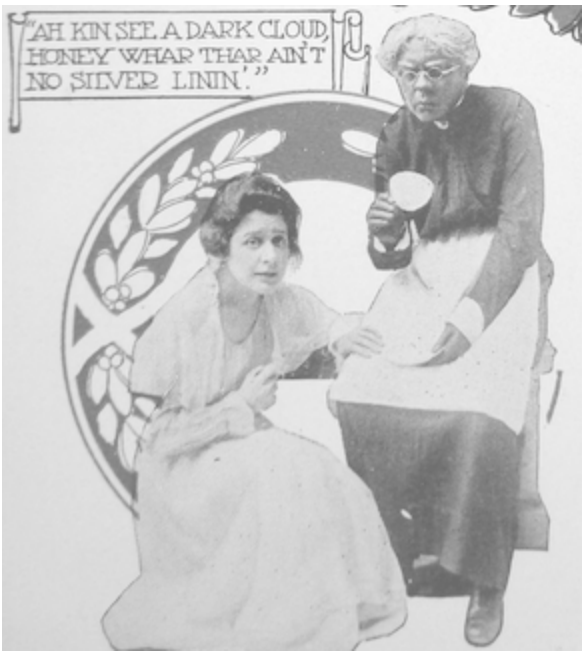
All in all, both dehumanized medical practice and the drastic measures of institutional reformers are presented as extant well-meaning practices, but they are also exposed as dangerous and possibly criminal tools if left to executives blinded by frenzied ambition, or tarnished by long-term debauchery. Since both the surgical and the reformative "knives" do accomplish some good, Walter retreats from condemning too explicitly a state of affairs whose contradictions are almost irreconcilable, and withdraws into the safer dramatic solution of sanctifying violated innocence in the person of Kate. Because the rehabilitation of the sullied woman was still a controversial topic in white slavery drama, Walter makes sure that her class origin, her upbringing, and her appearance persuade even the stiffest of audiences to accept her return to her original pedestal. In spite of the happy ending, however, Kate's childish demeanor and quasi-daughterly devotion to her fiancé do not fare intact through the moral and physical turbulence of her New York sojourn. Under the particular conditions of psychotropic alteration, the girl reveals a rougher texture that points to an eloquent subtext.

NOBODY'S DEAREST: ORIENTAL DOPES, ETHER, AND CURES

To actress Olive Wyndham, Kate Tarleton was "the most human being" she had ever played.[34] The opportunity to act a "vital, poignant, graphic personality" had been a much-awaited chance for the young actress, confined to play "colorless ingénues" until the moment in which Walter dismissed Lillian Anderson and decided to entrust Wyndham with the role.[35] All the reviewers recognized that rendering the complexity of the Southern girl required for an actor "compelling

emotional gifts":[36] caught between the superstitious upbringing provided by her loving black "Mammy" and the worship of science apprehended from her surgeon father, Kate is in fact a mediating figure at the intersection of the rural and urban, the occult and the rational, purity and perdition. Her apparent determination to pursue an ideal of self-effacing womanhood even when confronted with paradigms of modern femininity disguises a more ambivalent disposition. If superstition can be considered opium that clouds the intellect, Kate has come of age in a virtually stupefied atmosphere. In the absence of a natural mother, she is reared by a "Mammy" who "hammers into her" the romantic fantasy of marrying the only man that can take her out of stifling Norfolk. The soundness of the idea is supernaturally confirmed by the daily consultation of a magical oracle that, according to Mammy, sees the girl wed to Manning.

In white slavery tracts and brothel plays the black woman, when present, usually played the role of the brothel attendant. The black nurse in *The Knife*, a stunning mixture of primitivism and sagacity, is instead the motor of the plot's development as well as its psychic core. Kate, in fact, falls prey to the white slavers only because she insists on consulting a fortune-teller about the ominous cloud that Mammy has seen hovering on her future.



Publicity flier for *The Knife*: Kate's black mammy reads the girl's future in the tea leaves. Courtesy of the Shubert Archive.

In this sense, Mammy is complicit in the girl's "ruin," yet through superstition, she has also provided Kate with a language to express her insights, desires, and hidden fears. In New York, this capacity becomes a precious resource that allows her to resist the forceful pathologization of female experience that modern medicine seems to favor. Catapulted into an alien metropolitan world, Kate becomes acquainted with another guiding figure, Dr. Meredith, who incarnates the principles of white, professional New Womanhood. The mature emancipated woman and her naïve protégée was already a stock couple of early-twentieth-century literature, but in *The Knife*, the naïve girl, rather than opening up to new ideas thanks to the influence of a liberated woman, rejects the New Woman's example. However, whereas in her first meeting with Dr. Meredith, Kate proudly claims that "she wanted to be an old fashioned wife" (Act 1.27), she soon afterward nullifies her Victorian—and Southern—resolution, compelled by two uncontrollable urges that betray her unconscious reluctance to espouse this suffocating model. The first is her need to consult a fortune-teller, which she is compelled to do despite her fiancé's prohibition and for which she is instantly punished. Her second compulsion, an irrepressible desire to shop, is received with much less objection, even though it is phrased in extreme terms:

> Kate: As for me—I intend to have a good time in New York spending money—all the money that's been left me and has never been touched . . . the fun is throwing it away without having to account to anybody—I want to buy such a lot of clothes . . . now that I am going to marry you we'll never have to think about saving money. I am going to just, well, blow it in—right and left—until we march up the church aisle.
>
> Manning: Well, dear, I hope I shan't be a disappointment. (Prelude 10)

If Mammy's pagan influence provides a reservoir of resistance inspired by an archaic world, Kate's sudden desire to embark on an insatiable spending spree resonates with an extremely modern reaction against the commodification of women entailed by bourgeois marriage. Through consumption, Kate sets out to volatilize her father's legacy and to jeopardize her future husband's financial security. Such a dissipation of patrimony was a typical way to assert "agency," for example, for the iconic Gibson girl.[37] Whereas in *The Easiest Way* Laura Murdock is seduced by consumerism and rationally proceeds to become a commodity herself once the dream of love shatters irreparably, for Kate, the drive toward a consumptive sabotage of the bourgeois family assumes self-destructive overtones. By disobeying her future husband, she ends up squandering her most valuable capital, her purity, but interestingly becomes his wife in spite of now being "damaged goods." The complex dramaturgical mechanism that leads to this conclusion serves a variety of purposes, one of which is the resacralization of the promise of marriage as an indissoluble contract: "I don't see how you are going to get out of it"—Kate observes right after Manning proposes—"You've asked me and I've accepted (Prelude 4)." Quite surprisingly, in obliging her fiancé to honor the contract under all circumstances, Kate accomplishes a feminist enterprise, because her marriage despite her "lost virtue" importantly suggests that women should cease to be defined their virginity. In this respect, Walter echoes Edward Sheldon's treatment of the protagonist's sexual past in *The High Road*. With the appropriate distinctions, both authors stage women whose loss of sexual purity, be it accidental or voluntary, is inconsequential with regard to their fitness for marriage. Reading Kate as a closet feminist casts her willful adjustment to a "man's world" as a source of perturbation; her interior dissonances, constantly pressing against the surface of the plot, explode most blatantly in the peculiar state of chemically induced oblivion that follows her rescue.

In the night scene in which Manning and his associates break into the white slaver's house, Kate is found in a light coma. Manning brings her back to consciousness, but the girl is "completely dazed," her memory gone. Diagnosed with "acute aphasia," Kate is placed center

stage where, in turn, Manning, Billy, and Louise set up a sort of choral, hypnotic reprogramming of her identity according to myths of femininity and devotion that she unexpectedly rejects. Kate meets the infantilizing attentions of the people around her with stubborn hostility and anguished pain. Acknowledging that she has "been sleeping a very long time; a very long time" (Act 2.14), she awakens for the first time to a new side of her personality, a different self that rejects the allegiances she has made in the past:

> Manning: Don't you know who I am, dearest? The man you are going to marry, Bob Manning, whom you have known all your life.
>
> Kate: I don't seem to understand you. It's—it's all so different, and I don't want you to call me dearest. I don't want anyone to do that. I won't have it!!! (Act 2.15)

Although she cannot grasp the extent of what has happened to her, Kate does not trust the clinical explanation she receives ("You have been very, very ill"). The condition that excludes Kate from the consortium of pure women seems to mark, more significantly, the end of her state of infancy. Having been turned, in spite of herself, into a woman, Kate dismisses as incomprehensible the reassuring medical (and marital) idiom that reduces her shock to an unexplained illness, and embraces instead her epistemological and moral crises: "Oh, I don't know! They said it was right. But my mammy would know! . . . My heart is broken I want to cry and I want to scream, oh, please" (Act 2.18, 2.19).

Publicity flier for *The Knife*: In the presence of her future husband and a lady doctor, Kate recovers consciousness after having been drugged and abused by the white slavers. Courtesy of the Shubert Archive.

Rather than a moment of regression, the invocation of her Mammy's irrational beliefs constitutes an inchoate condemnation of the risks of modernity and its preposterous sense of positive justice. But what is the substance that has unleashed Kate's idiosyncrasies?

The history of anesthetics in America counts numerous descriptions of the strange performative power that these chemicals seemed to possess. Long before they were widely used in medicine, gas anesthetics such as nitrous oxide were used by traveling chemists and quacks in public demonstrations of the drugs' mysterious influence. From the early nineteenth century the curious crowds that flocked to these spectacles appreciated the strangely liberating effects of the potent gases. According to Joseph M. Gabriel, "men struck their social betters and ripped off their clothes, women declared themselves superior to men and imperiously ordered them about; both sexes happily blurted out secrets that they later found terribly embarrassing."[38]

In this light, a woman rendered a "feminist" by a drug was a grotesque spectacle that had titillated audiences well before Broadway. Viewing a reversal of social norms by a drugged Southern belle within

the safety of a clinical framework held an entertainment value that was both thrilling and reassuring. In contrast, the idea of narcotics associated with the white slavers, often described as “dope fiends,” invited condemnation, as drug dependence set the traffickers irremediably apart from civil society, and defined them as socially incurable. Even the substance they use to sedate Kate is initially exoticized according to the nativist imagination that often informed the white slavers’ profile. Yet what Billy surmises to be “some sort of Oriental dope” is later identified as ether—the prince of medical anesthetics and of the elation of the soul. As the pseudo-oriental fortune-teller disguises a consummate technique perfected by institutionally well-connected criminals, his “oriental dope” is also in fact a product of Western modernity. As Kate promptly recognizes, ether is the mark of the surgeon and its use renders the wretched Madame and her buddy a parody of the Manning-Meredith dyad. In this inverted universe, they perform an operation that is of the exact opposite sign with respect to the official doctors’ normalizing intentions and that consequently provides the girl with an interlude of freedom—not an unknown precedent in the history of etherization.

The pleasurable use of diethyl ether was traditionally connected to the alteration of one’s senses; the disorientation and loss of self-control it produced for a brief though significant span was associated with a sense of enjoyable liberty, followed by a freedom from the constrictions of physical pain.[39] In a similar way, Kate is temporarily freed from the constrictions of her social position and liberated from the weight of all that has been imposed upon her. Kate’s transformation is so perceptible that even Manning’s professional confidence falters, overcome by the worry that her new volition will never subside. Manning seems to be the only one to intuit—and fear—the deep nature of Kate’s reversal of personality but, tucking away his Freudian preoccupations, he wholeheartedly embraces the belief that an experience never remembered is an experience that never was: “Then she must never know, never suspect, never” (Act 3.11). Neuro-pathologization was not an uncommon verdict for numerous behaviors thought to be grounded in some intrinsically female disorder. In this specific case the gendered

illness coded as loss of memory is the loss of virginity. Amnesia thus becomes both the diagnosis and the therapy, a camouflage and a placebo, beneficial less to Kate than to the honor of her class.

Probably inspired by one of the most acclaimed treatments for the "moral reeducation" of women, Manning and Meredith concoct for Kate a hybrid version of what the renowned Philadelphia doctor, and convinced anti-Freudian Silas Weir Mitchell, baptized "the rest cure."[40] As Gilman immortalized in her "The Yellow Wallpaper," Mitchell treated neurasthenia and nervous weakness by prescribing long periods of rest, the avoidance of all intellectual activity, and the acceptance of what he saw as the natural roles of wife and mother.[41] Also advisable was that the woman in question would not interfere whatsoever with the diagnosis or treatment, leaving to the medical authority all responsibility for her ailing person.[42] According to Martha Cutter, Mitchell argued that hysteria occurred in women who had "lost their power to 'self rule,'" or, less euphemistically, in women who could not resign themselves to the limitations of traditional domestic roles. In this perspective, Kate is a textbook hysteric and the therapy she is prescribed conforms with the implicit goal of stamping out any signs of non-conformity as well as compelling her to revere the male doctor's—and husband's—power, thus doubly intensifying her subjection to her future husband.[43] Much of Manning's "oblivion cure" reflects Mitchell's standards: Kate is secluded from city life, and sent "to the woods"; with Meredith's constant supervision of Meredith she is kept in complete ignorance of her condition, and she is schooled about the importance of her inspirational, rather than active, role as the future wife of an important man. Quite literally, medical therapy is inflicted on Kate as a form of social hygiene.

The concern with the conservation of purity and the status quo re-emerges with emphasis in the last act, when the girl's recovered memory dismantles the conspiracy of silence around her. Although Manning persists in his attempt to conceal the rape, all his associates understand that Kate's "confession" will provide the "moral justification" for the crime they committed (Act 3.42). The urge to tell what happened has obvious therapeutic undertones for Kate: by overcoming the injunction

of silence she can finally break free from the cage of pathology constructed around her and repossess herself of her mental faculties: “But, Bob! Then I wasn’t sick. I wasn’t sick . . . I am sure, and I want to tell. . . . I’m going to tell the truth—all of it. No one can stop me. Do you hear Bob, no one can stop me” (Act 3.43). This is the moment in which Kate’s resistance to Manning’s paternalism is strongest: her confession is an act of liberation as much as one of retaliation. As one commentator acutely noted, the girl’s pained account “had the tone of Evelyn Nesbit’s well remembered confession on the witness stand.”[44] A legendary beauty who had been one of Dana Gibson’s muses, Nesbit was famously involved in a 1906 trial whose defendant was her abusive husband, Harry K. Thaw. The mentally unstable heir of a wealthy family, Thaw had sensationally killed Stanford White, a notorious architect and womanizer guilty of having deflowered Nesbit when she was barely into her teens. During the trial, Nesbit not only described the abuses she suffered from her husband, but also detailed, for the first time in public, the loss of her virginity—while drugged—at the hand of White.[45] Unlike Nesbit, who related the facts reluctantly, crumpling under the pressure of the defense attorney, Kate re-appropriates her experience triumphantly, wielding it against her fiancé’s authority with spite. However, in the economy of the play this outburst of volition is the last heave of her neurotic manifestations. Having autonomously worked through her mental darkness so that she can reaffirm her neurological health, Kate is restored to calm and compliance, cured of all her symptoms, including willful independence. Probably because she has not consciously experienced defilement, etherized as she was, she accepts its occurrence unemotionally—even fatalistically: “the tea leaves said so, and I am her —defiled” (Act 3.46), but instead of being sent back to her Mammy, she is, in that moment, restored to her virginal position and set forth toward the completion of her romantic destiny.

In a way, the ether that protected Kate from the rupture of psychic integrity and from effective sexualization has protected her, as the doctors had hoped, from experience. In a play in which evil and good seem to swap places many times, in which the villains are somewhat victimized and the elective hero shows a touch of evil, and in which the

law flirts with crime while the biggest criminal is the highest man of the law, the epistemic and moral horizons are besieged by an overwhelming relativism. The paradox of preserved innocence in the face of lost virtue rectifies the confused array of claims that have unfolded throughout the action. Scott, the man of justice, pithily describes the rearrangement of hierarchies by way of conclusion: “The way it happened, and what has come out of it—is bigger than anything. Bigger than any puny words that men can scribble in a book of law. . . . It’s the way God works, I guess” (Act 3.47). White slavery is a threat that calls for transcendent intervention, rather than for the rules of civil society, which it exceptionally suspends. Since in the play the battles against crime and a mysterious unnamed disease run in parallel, the legal dispensation accorded to the opponents of social evil is extended to those of biological evil. The correlation between social and physical ailments, and consequently between reformers and doctors, is expressed in clear terms by Kate, the real mouthpiece for untrammeled medical research, who is confident that Manning will relieve “millions and millions of suffering people who have inherited diseases and all sorts of ailments from generations of neglect, from the lack of thinking people to tell them” (Prelude 8).[46]

By introducing the concept of heredity she touches on that vein of social neo-Darwinism to which Manning also adheres. With the discovery of the curative serum, the doctor declares himself “just a little cog in the great big machine [of] . . . evolution” (Act 3.7). Simultaneously, he discounts the dead woman as just “a thing in my laboratory,” thus producing a qualitative distinction between the worthy subjects that his serum should heal, and those that it might as well kill. As a new couple consisting of two excellent representatives of “racial” evolution who are also involved in grand civilizing designs, Manning and Kate are key elements in a patently eugenic project. Not by chance the play culminates with Manning calling his discovery “the boon that will bring happiness to the world” (Act 3.48). If the greater good is universal happiness for a healthy and virtuous humanity, then Kate is logically the sacrificial lamb who redeems the murderer and simultaneously absolves the rough ways of progress (Act 3.48). Even though the romantic plot

seems to contradict the critique of inhumane scientific inroads into human life, the nature of the relationship between Manning and Kate exemplifies the role models who represent a successful familial enterprise at the end of the 1910s. Never entirely likeable, the couple embodies the Progressive ambivalence toward some aspects of modernity while manifesting, together with a desire to tame a vicious society, a certain mistrust toward the tamers. As suggested above, the panic surrounding white slavery was instrumental in obtaining wide acceptance of otherwise inadmissible measures of public intervention. In this light, *The Knife* metaphorically exposed the superficial use made of the myth of threatened purity by an administrative system dominated by powerful interests. Although the system of social hygiene is hardly mentioned in the play, the medicalization of reform appears as a key to the regeneration of society as well as an invasive jurisdiction over the sick body.

CONTAGION AND CONFIDENTIALITY: *THE CRUX*

Among other things, *The Knife* registered that the choices made by physicians in terms of medical confidentiality were completely arbitrary and directed at shielding a developing professional autonomy rather than protecting the patient's privacy. Dr. Louise Meredith, not unlike France Foster in the Moore trial, embodies the principle that professional women should not only espouse this corporate ethos, but act according to gender-biased, rather than gender-blind, standards in order to be included as equals in a male-dominated field. Whereas in *The Knife* a conspiratorial alliance of doctors and public officers employs medical language to cover up a social disorder, in the real world, most women unknowingly infected with syphilis were denied the medical truth and fed instead old wives' tales—such as, for example, the awful contagious effects of the public drinking cup.[47] This peculiarity of the transmission of syphilis went under the medical euphemism of *veneral insontium* and indicated the infection of unaware wives and newborn children through the bacteria that a sick husband introduced into the family.

One who resolved to dispel the guilty silence that justified the forced ignorance of women through the injunction of purity was Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Certain that the increasing number of women entering the medical profession would eventually change this state of affairs for the better, she incorporated her hopes and convictions in her novel *The Crux*, serialized in 1910. In the didactic piece, the author both remedied the disinformation that threatened female gynecological health and exposed the complicity of most male physicians in doing so. [48] To reinforce the medical soundness of her fiction, Gilman cited the father of American Social Hygiene, Dr. Prince Morrow, and his book *Syphilis and Marriage* in her 1911 preface;[49] at the same time she openly diverged from the conventions of her time and penned her foreword as a manifesto against a widespread brand of murderous "innocence":

> This story is, first for young women to read; second, for young men to read; after that, for anybody who wants to. . . . The time to know of danger is before it is too late to avoid it. If some say "innocence is the greatest charm of young girls," the answer is, "What good does it do them?" (23)

Throughout the novel squeamishness in matters of sex education is condemned as a guilty shortcoming and lady doctors are indicated as the most significant vehicle of change;[50] not least because they approach medical confidentiality with different standards. Dr. Jane Bellair is the classic early-generation New Woman: independent and compassionate, she is the exact opposite of her male colleague in the novel—the embittered and lonely Dr. Hale. When Dr. Bellair is informed by a servant that the prospective husband of her protegée has contracted both gonorrhea and syphilis, she first seeks the support of her male counterpart, since he is the young man's doctor. But Dr. Hale stubbornly refuses all cooperation. First he invokes the "necessarily factual (and detached) status of medical science": "I am a physician, not a detective. And I am not Miss Lane's father, brother, uncle or guardian" (123). Then he points to a brand of professional honor that sets him above the female practitioners:

> "It is a matter of honor—professional honor. You women don't seem to know what the word means. . . . I will not betray the confidence of a patient." "Not if he had smallpox, or scarlet fever, or the bubonic plague? . . . A man's honor seems to want to kill a woman to satisfy it. I'm glad I haven't got the feeling." (124)

Concluding that "that young syphilitic is no patient of mine" (124), Dr. Bellair marches off to inform Vivian, who receives the news with sorrow, but with the determination to break the engagement.

The discussion between the two doctors dramatizes a debate that had been raging to such a degree that, in 1912, the American Medical Association (AMA) revised its "principles of Medical ethics" to address the thorny issue. Disputing the fictional male doctors' positions, certainly common among most real ones, the AMA compelled physicians who had knowledge of a risk of infection to act "as [they] would desire another to act toward one of [their] own [families] under like circumstances."[51] The circumspection of the wording bespeaks the crisis in medical ethics generated by the gender loyalties that tied physicians to their patients. Even Dr. Prince Morrow himself was rather conservative in matter of medical secrets, and American doctors never reached a consensus on the issue.[52] The dominant tendency among social hygienists was to favor "eugenic marriage laws." In a way, doctors would rather have citizens forced by law to produce a health certificate than personally breach their confidentiality obligation.

Deliberately enforcing a male and corporate prerogative, Gilman entered the debate of medical deontology, not only in fiction, but in reality: at a meeting of the American Society for Sanitary and Moral Prophylaxis she stated that women should "understand all the facts" of venereal disease and especially "have the knowledge and the power" to act accordingly.[53] In keeping with this principle, she packed her fiction with realistic medical diagnoses, explaining for her readers the terminology and symptoms they could hardly learn elsewhere. In spite of adopting "manly" scientific talk, Bellair's medical style is indicated as superior precisely because her practice vivified detached masculine science with maternal empathy. In this respect Gilman's depiction of the

female doctor inverts the literary conventions that required such characters to be unmarriageable and unsexed by medical study.[54] Quite to the contrary, Dr. Bellair's sympathetic approach is rooted in experience: made sterile by the gonorrhea she had contracted from her husband, she divorced him and became a doctor "to save" other women, and with Vivian she succeeds. If Gilman's female characters can and must divorce, it is obviously not out of revenge, but out of a civic duty to "get rid of undesirable [sick] citizens" and, consequently, "save the race." Five years after *The Crux*, Gilman also narrates the opposite story, and in "The Vintage" she addresses those women who remain in a sick marriage until it kills them. The protagonist of the short story, Leslie Montroy, actually never learns that her future husband has syphilis. Her doctor chooses not to inform her when she is about to marry, nor later when she suffers a series of miscarriages, nor when she dies a mysterious death.[55] Whereas *The Crux* still expressed confidence and optimism about the developments in science and society, "The Vintage" bespoke a resentful bitterness, possibly related to the more conservative climate that darkened Gilman's vision precisely as doctors became prominent as social hygienists.

Fulfilling Priscilla Wald's definition of "outbreak narratives" as forms of cultural autobiography in which the scientific, the social, and the fictional intermingle, *The Crux* proved to be a secondary thread in the "tale of contagion" whose pattern constitutes the historical roots of today's conventions. Outbreak narratives have their science-loving heroes (mostly doctors), their germ-spreading villains, and neatly formulaic plots that start with the identification of the infection, include a discussion of the transmission network, and celebrate national salvation in the medical work that contains the hazard.[56] Needless to say, neither the feminist lady doctor nor the ostracized male "superspreader" became the dominant narrative motor of scientific tales of national advancement. Quite to the contrary, the signature outbreak narrative of the Progressive Era came from France and, not surprisingly, put forth educational precepts that differed considerably according to the gender and class of the addressee. The American theater audience embraced the shift lamented in "The Vintage" by bestowing unexpected

success on *Damaged Goods*, a play that the *New York Times* baptized "a medical sermon" likely to "start an epoch-making movement in the country."[57]

SYPHILIS AND THE MEDICAL HAND OF REFORM: *DAMAGED GOODS*

Eugène Brieux's *Les Avariés*, written in 1901 and banned in France until 1905, was certainly more "a sermon" than a "medical" piece, since the abundant decade spanning between its first production and its American debut as *Damaged Goods* left it scientifically obsolete. Its soft language, which had been groundbreaking in 1900 Paris, was by 1913 so tame that the play ran unhindered on the American stage through a period of raging censorship.[58] Furthermore it received public endorsement by a committee of notables elected by the *Medical Review of Reviews*, it was performed at the White House for President Wilson, and later spearheaded the army's prophylactic program during World War I. Precisely because *Damaged Goods* reflected those elements of the social hygiene agenda embraced by the conservative fringe of the Progressive movement, its contribution to disrupting the "conspiracy of silence" around syphilis was far more modest than its dissemination of a reactionary understanding of morality, gender, and class roles. In light of the overwhelmingly positive reception of *Damaged Goods* in America, *The Crux* appears as the road not taken by a public health debate firmly anchored to its patriarchal foundations.

The way in which the widespread campaign against physical and social pathologies came to favor such a conservative vision—and the reason why *Damaged Goods*, unlike *The Crux*, was the perfect propaganda piece for this trend—becomes clearer if we consider that outbreak narratives, with their positivistically reassuring agendas, are scientific melodramas in disguise, hence most successful when they are inherently conservative. Whereas Gilman referenced Morrow, Brieux, for his part, dedicated his play to Morrow's professor, the French venereologist Jean-Alfred Fournier.[59] These intellectual affiliations seem to underline a common commitment to hygienic principles that, in

America, blended together the defense of the family as the reproductive organ of the nation, and the preservation of its biological integrity as a guarantee for the improvement of the race. However, although both plots stem from the common dilemma of an infected man about to marry without informing his future wife of his condition, *The Crux* and *Damaged Goods* are separated by a considerable ideological distance that is epitomized in the doctors at the center of the stories—a conservative male physician in Brieux's case—and that emerges most strongly in gendered patient-doctor interactions which reveal the necessity to strengthen the unstable epistemological status of medicine.

In *Damaged Goods* the patient is a young and promising lawyer—George Dupont—who, aware of having contracted syphilis, ignores his doctor's advice to postpone his financially advantageous marriage for fear of losing his socio-economic investment. Deaf to science, he seeks the comfort of a quack and cheerfully proceeds to get married, only to breed a sick daughter within a year. The doctor is summoned again, this time to cure the infant, and the gravity of the situation brings out his real mission: in fact, rather than disclosing the facts of pathology to those exposed to the infection (the wife and the wet nurse for example, but also the audience), he acts exclusively in his capacity as social architect. If nation-building is the ultimate goal, the re-institution of a healed father as head of the household is the most urgent intermediate step that science must help achieve. To the American public the play showed how the framework of contagion could refresh the traditional concerns of the purity advocates engaged in social hygiene, while stripping them of the proto-feminist impulse that had been conspicuous when the purity adventure began.

The resulting rhetorical weapon was a masculinist rhetoric of fear and salvation, a device that in *Damaged Goods* transfigures Dupont's socially irresponsible act into a "private" sin that could be atoned for in the secrecy of the doctor's office. The physician is thus hailed as a confessor, and as a confessor he refuses to disclose Dupont's condition, even to save other lives.[60] In this logic the secret and lengthy cure that Dupont begins becomes a personal process of expiation. According to Annette Kuhn, in the two cinematic versions that followed shortly after

the play, the logic of sin and reparation is visually emphasized by scientifically graphic depictions of the effects of syphilis both in the form of textbook pictures and in the display of patients.[61] Rather than being preventive, the horror of these spectacles is subsumed in an economy of individual purging that includes an expiatory cure and a final reward. By convincing the wife's influential father to renounce the idea of divorce, the doctor indirectly recompenses Dupont's healing with the reintegration into his role of *paterfamilias*; at the same time, he suggests that biological regeneration outside of the nuclear family would mean that medicine had failed its highest mission.[62]

Symptomatically, the precious medical information that should be divulged among the population is circulated only within a strictly male circle, while the women in the play are limited to gleaning fortuitous scraps of knowledge. In the face of a health risk, women of all classes are met with exclusion and oblivion rather than with counsel and cure. By sending the nurse back to the countryside, the threat she poses to the family's reputation is hastily neutralized. The wife, whose only expression of grief is the inarticulate shriek of the madwoman, recoils under her father's wing (60), only to reappear as a forgiving figurine in the happy ending. To be sure, the female public might also have been illuminated by the observation of the contradiction between the logic that sacrificed female safety to male honor, and by the implicit warnings against doctors' accountability. Far from damaging the professional credibility of the medical class, their selective silence defines physicians as aware social actors whose ideological beliefs override the imperative to preserve health. Unlike Gilman's Dr. Jane Bellair, who conceives of "no forgiveness for biological sin," Brieux's doctor implies that voluntary conjugal infection is a condonable in the face of a restored familial integrity. In *Damaged Goods*, the homosocial pact among the pillars of society (the doctor, the father, and the legislator—Dupont's father-in-law is a congressman) eventually proves fruitfully consolidated, rather than threatened, by the "objectifying" authority of official medicine.

Without dismissing the contribution of microbiology entirely, *Damaged Goods* openly refuted the perception of syphilis as solely a dispassionate health threat, and posited itself in the phase, common to

most outbreak narratives, devoted to the mapping of that human interconnectedness that both imperils and defines a community. Read within this framework, the survival of preposterous assumptions long after their scientific refutation is not surprising.[63] It demonstrates, rather, how medical "myths" derive their authority not so much from science itself, but from their adherence to the paradigmatic convictions of the community that upholds them.[64] The enduring myth of extra-genital infection emphasized by Shaw in the 1907 introduction to Brieux's plays that the *Times* reprinted in 1913, is a case in point. In a time in which the acceptance of the "germ theory" of disease transmission had been accepted together with the idea that almost any sort of object could carry dangerous microbes,[65] it was not difficult to disseminate the conviction that even *maladies révélatrices* could be contracted extra-venereally. While claiming that "the unmentionable must be mentioned on stage," Shaw weakened the impact of the revelation, stating—erroneously—that "there are dozens of indirect ways in which this contagion can take place" (iv). This belief in non-sexual transmission allowed for the scapegoating of working class and new immigrant populations and consequently encouraged nativist and racist understandings of venereal pathologies. The play itself does not indulge in such theories and even presents the epidemics within a critique of the socio-economic inequities that account for the great numbers of sick prostitutes and infected working-class women. However, when suggesting the dynamics of contagion, Brieux exclusively invokes the model of disease transmission that traces infection from a prostitute to a sexually profligate man, and eventually to his innocent wife and offspring.[66] Among the patterns that outbreak narratives follow, the repetition of particular characters is a common occurrence; the epidemiological model of *Damaged Goods* presents two classic types that Wald terms the "healthy carrier" and the "superspreader."[67]

In the play, both of these types are prostitutes; the fact that they are also victims ("the products and the cause" [79]) does not make them any less dangerous, even though their already impure status at least affords them the right to learn the facts about their condition. The "healthy carrier," the ostensibly decent woman who has contaminated

Dupont, possesses an ability for class passing that marks her as a peculiar threat, the "social contagion" she fosters being even more disquieting than the epidemic itself. While lower ranking professional prostitutes are easily circumscribed, the healthy carrier is the real wayward woman in the play in that she transgresses between different worlds, uniting them in a way that compels attention and raises uncomfortable questions when anonymity is most desired. She is the demonstration that syphilis can neither be ignored nor be considered just another communicable disease because, like the healthy carrier herself, it "makes visible the nature of those exchanges which are often concealed" with its "records of desire, of violence, of sexual commerce."[68] Not surprisingly, Deputy Loches reveals these concerns by deprecating syphilis as the disgraceful material connection between his progeny and the women of the streets, finding most intolerable the subliminal obligation to acknowledge these outcasts as "family": "Thanks to him [Dupont], this abject creature, this prostitute, lives our life, makes one of our family, sits down with us at table" (65).

Redefining prevention in terms of sexual conduct, *Damaged Goods* ultimately calls for the establishment of a social order in which diseases are "non-communicable" because the communication between classes is minimized; an order in which men's sexual drive is domesticated, genteel wives further muted and isolated, and the spaces of interaction sanitized. The spirochete reveals how porous the intimate boundaries between the lower and the higher classes are; hence the introduction of a malevolent superspreader in the play conveniently tilts the balance of culpability for transmission toward deviant or primitive subjects. Significantly, the play closes with the testimony of one young prostitute who admits to having vengefully spread syphilis as a reaction against the man who infected her in the first place. This topos registered an attitude toward sexual transmission so enduring that even contemporary narratives in the mass media of the origin of the AIDS epidemic in North America presented the superspreader as a healthy-looking "patient Zero" who transmitted the disease intentionally.[69] Using the piteous language of victimization, *Damaged Goods* then insinuates the existence of a moral and physical underclass whose capacity for spreading disease is

qualitatively different than that of higher classes and quantitatively unpredictable. When, with the advent of the war, the community in question ceased to be centered on a class, but was extended to the nation—more precisely to the male (military) body of the nation at war—exceptional measures for the containment of venereal disease gradually became the norm while the "spreaders" they targeted did not differ greatly from those indicated in *Damaged Goods*.

CODA: THE AMERICAN PLAN

Although the prostitute had been a great preoccupation for generations of Progressives, only the exceptionality of the war effort and the cooperation of the medical profession allowed for the implementation of a normative regime that saw "the triumph of a male state promulgating new policies encoding the double standard."[70] The educational potential of the theater in establishing this regime was immediately exploited when World War I began: in the same months in which Walter's white slavery parable staged the symbolic triumph of laboratory science over the procedures of rights and justice, the War Department asked Richard Bennet to tour with the filmed version of *Damaged Goods* both in America and overseas, to help educate servicemen about venereal disease.[71] Not much later, military propaganda created its own sex hygiene films intended to provide "mental inoculation" against syphilis. The outbreak narrative that had long thrived in civil society thus shifted to a martial environment and its plot accelerated madly, driven by the pressures of war.

The association between soldierly vice and venereal disease is as old as war itself, but, at the zenith of Progressivism, deploying an army that was both bodily inefficient and morally corrupt seemed particularly unacceptable. For this reason, already on the occasion of the conflicts at the Mexican border in 1916, the ASHA ordered an investigation of the soldiers' condition with a view to devising a program for the moral and physical reinvigoration of the army. The report from the Mexican border disclosed to Secretary of War Newton D. Baker the existence of a conspicuous network of red light districts surrounding the camps and a 30 percent rate of venereal infection among the troops. These findings

made the social hygienists call for an immediate attack on prostitution, also in preparation for the larger conflict looming ahead.[72]

Although many Progressive reformers, such as Jane Addams, opposed the war, others, like President Wilson and Secretary Baker, translated the war into Progressive terms and viewed it both as a crusade in the international sphere as well as an opportunity for a domestic reform program that started with the moral renewal of the troops.[73] The remaking of the training camp environment was seen as an important step toward a larger transformation of American customs, and the presence of syphilis provided the justification for the ASHA's micromanagement of the enterprise. The entire staff of the Association was mobilized and, less than two weeks after the declaration of war, largely absorbed into a newly created federal agency, the Commission on Training Camp Activities (CTCA). In cooperation with the Surgeon General's office, the CTCA implemented what came to be known as the "American Plan," a two-pronged attack against venereal disease in the army, whose educational arm provided wholesome recreation and prophylactic information, while its repressive arm orchestrated a gradual but inexorable scheme to rid the nation at large of vice.[74]

In the attempt to inculcate an edifying vision of manhood, the CTCA reiterated the virgin/prostitute dichotomy typical of most brothel plays and white slavery tracts and spread similar fears of social and physical contamination. The war was cast as a virile battle for the protection of those "pure" women who followed the fight from home. Lectures and pamphlets reminded the soldiers that illicit intercourse should be avoided at all costs because an inefficient body would fail to protect the angels of the hearth, and constitute a disgraceful act of anti-patriotism.[75] Initially, it was mostly prostitutes who came to be viewed as a menace to the (male) body of the nation, just like the foreign enemy and its deadly weapons.[76] The first full-length motion picture produced by the CTCA, *Fit to Win*, dramatized this principle with hyperinfective streetwalkers who produced instant venereal ulcers with only the touch of their lips. Conversely, the model of masculinity celebrated in the film ideally combined virginal rigor and manly pugnaciousness, but endorsed the use of the prophylactic station at the training camp for those who

still wavered.[77] Since this restrictive educational model did not yield the expected results, the CTCA shifted its focus to those women who subverted the war effort by seducing American soldiers away from their duty. Emotionally ungovernable women who apparently could not resist a uniform and the so-called "charity girls" became the target of a new section of the CTCA in charge of the "girl problem."[78] Part of their campaign was, again, cinematic: *The End of the Road*, written by Katherine Bement Davis, dictated sexual abstinence and patriotism for girls who pursued happiness in life. The pure heroine of the film, a nurse, is rewarded for her integrity with a marriage to an army doctor, while misguided, thoughtless, or weaker women find disease and hysterectomies at the "end of the road."[79]

As some female reformers immediately observed, the sanitarians who ran the U.S. Public Health Service were obviously committed to male and military health, rather than to the enforcement of a single standard of sexuality. Consequently, before long, prevention and moral uplift were replaced with initiatives of vice repression. The Commission parceled the nation into sections and sent vice investigators who, with the cooperation of local officials, enforced old and new laws with unmatched zeal. Prostitutes were indiscriminately arrested, 110 red-light districts—including the legendary Storyville in New Orleans—were closed down, and "moral zones" were instituted around the camps so that any suspicious woman found in the area could be arrested as a prostitute, tested for venereal disease, and detained until "cured."[80] Waving the flag of the "interest of the soldiers," CTCA activists and supporters enforced detention measures that, in spite of some opposition,[81] produced the reorientation of what had been conceived as "protective work for girls" into an organ of coercion that extended the legal treatment reserved for prostitutes to "delinquent girls and all girls between the ages of 10 and 21 against whom there has been any definite complaint [including] the so-called charity girl and professional prostitute, whether diseased or not, and with women having venereal disease."[82] Estimates on the number of women ultimately detained under the CTCA's law enforcement program suggest a figure around 30,000 women over a period of twenty-seven months. The federal

measures, detention structures, and legal apparatus created during the war were not entirely disbanded in its aftermath. [83]

The principles guiding the surveillance of female sexual behavior created by social hygienists during the war were not new. Pledging to eliminate the double standard, social hygiene instead reinforced it, using arbitrary epidemiological premises to deprive women of their civil rights. The wartime sacralization of the soldier's body justified governmental policies that translated the critique of female independence, adumbrated for at least a decade by the discourse of white slavery, into coercive action. Born as a modern, scientific, gender-integrated force, the social hygiene movement ended up as the materialization of the most conservative fringe of Progressivism. The failure of the maternalist ideals corresponded to the triumph of an outbreak narrative that saw national salvation incarnated in the dual figure of the soldier and the army doctor. If, through its polarizing nature, melodrama simplifies the representation of complex social relations to restore clarity in times of change, then plays like *The Knife* and *Damaged Goods* clearly define the physician as the elective hero who can re-establish order in a society gone morally awry, a society whose decay is objectified in an insidious bacterium. At the same time, in virtue of their pre-realist sensibility, these plays hint at the socio-political allegiances thinly veiled by the supposedly impartial idiom of science and expose medicine as a pliable medium in the hand of reformers who were, probably with sincerity, trying to impose their Procrustean solution on the multifarious American reality. Brothel plays shaped around preoccupations with female purity and the promiscuous interactions of metropolitan life thus presented doctor-patient relations that showed the dystopic possibilities harbored in the marriage between medicine and reform. During the war, this union undeniably demonstrated that, as a *pharmakon* can never be simply beneficial,[84] reform was a powerful medicine that an excessive dosage turned into a paralyzing drug for a broad layer of citizens. As George Rosen has put it, epidemics dramatize the need for regulation through the invocation of an administrative machinery of prevention and supervision.[85] But if this "terrifying urgency" can help to overturn or

reinforce governing authority, the narrative of epidemics, Wald observes, "is typically harnessed in the service of reinforcement." Thus to realize the promise of a healed society, the wayward woman becomes the subject that can be expended to safeguard the health of the nation.

NOTES

1. Kristin Luker, "Sex, Social Hygiene, and the State: The Double-Edged Sword of Social Reform," *Theory and Society* 27, no. 5 (1998): 37. Allan Brandt has produced, to date, the most satisfactory history of venereal disease from the Progressive Era to the second half of the twentieth century. Allan M. Brandt, *No Magic Bullet: A Social History of Venereal Disease in the US since 1880* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). David Pivar, in addition to his classic treatment of the "purity crusade" (quoted in the introduction) has also analyzed the rise of social hygiene in his subsequent book: David J. Pivar, *Purity and Hygiene: Women, Prostitution, and the American Plan 1900–1930* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002).
2. John Duffy, *The Sanitarians: A History of American Public Health* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 128–29.
3. Ibid., 147.
4. John Parascandola, *Sex, Sin and Science: A History of Syphilis in America* (Westport: Praeger, 2008), 32–33.
5. John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 205.
6. Pivar, *Purity and Hygiene*, xv. See also Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 1820–1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, [1967] 1978), 278–79.
7. Luker, "Sex, Social Hygiene, and the State," 607.
8. Mark T. Connelly, *The Response to Prostitution in the United States* (Chapel Hill: The University of Carolina Press, 1980), 72 and John C. Burnham, "Medical Inspection of Prostitutes in American in the Nineteenth Century: The Saint Louis Experiment and Its Sequel," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 45 (1971).
9. Pivar, *Purity and Hygiene*, 119.
10. Ibid., 33.

11. “Tense Melodrama by Eugene Walter,” *New York Times*, April 13, 1917.
12. *The Easiest Way* earned the distinction of being selected by John Gassner as the best play of 1909, an honor that enshrined Eugene Walter in the dramatic canon of the pre-O’Neill age. See Eugene Walter, “The Easiest Way,” in John Gassner, ed., *Best Plays of Early American Theatre, 1787–1911* (Mineola: Dover Publications, 1909).
13. As the present book goes into print *The Knife* is still unpublished. References to page numbers (in parentheses) will follow the pagination of the copy preserved at the Shubert Archives in New York. I have not been able to locate a critical assessment of the play, even though it is mentioned in Johnson’s *Sister in Sin* as “one of the best extant white slave plays, and should be included in any critical reception of Walter’s work.” Katie N. Johnson, *Sisters in Sin: Brothel Drama in America, 1900–1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 122. As to the contemporary reception of the play, some thirty reviews are available describing and commenting on the production of the play in Chicago (Chicago Theater, premier on February 28, 1917), in New York (Bijou Theater, April 12, 1917), and in Boston (Shubert Theater, October 1, 1917). On Broadway alone *The Knife* ran for about eighty-four performances.
14. “*The Knife* is Eugene Walter’s Strongest Play,” *New York Evening*, April 13, 1917.
15. Charles W. Collins, “Mr. Walter Writes of Mixed Horrors,” *Chicago Evening Post*, March 1, 1917.
16. F. W. Jordan, Shubert press department note (New York, Shubert Archive, n.d., ca. 1917).
17. Ibid.
18. Eugene Walter, Shubert press department note (New York, Shubert Archive, n.d., ca. 1917).
19. The *Boston Evening Transcript*, for example, did not question Walter’s good faith, but considered the author’s intention to write a gripping story as more pressing than his preoccupation with “thoughtful” topics. An unnamed reviewer in a New York newspaper, instead, judged the play “so eloquent of theatrical design and insincerity that it has no power to

excite sustained interest or sympathy." Clipping collection (New York, Shubert Archive, n.d. ca. 1917).
20. Louis Sherwin, "Eugene Walter's *The Knife* at the New Bijou," *Commercial Advertiser*, April 13, 1917.
21. "New Bijou Arrives with Real Thriller," *New York World*, April 13, 1917.
22. Shubert Press Department Note (New York, Shubert Archive, n.d. ca. 1917). The expression was picked up in the review published in the *New York Commercial* ("*The Knife*, A Thriller Opens Bijou Theatre," *New York Commercial*, April 13, 1917).
23. As quoted in Johnson, *Sisters in Sin*, 121.
24. Drawing on his experience as a white slavery investigator in Chicago, George Scarborough set *The Lure* in an urban tenement. Unable to support her sick mother, Sylvia resorts to the help of a brothel owner. Half choosing and half suffering sexual enslavement, the girl is saved, together with her virtue, by the timely intervention of a government man. To complete the melodrama, the latter falls in love with Sylvia and provides her mother with the necessary treatment. For a brief critical assessment of the play see Johnson, *Sisters in Sin*, 128–33. At the time of this research *The Lure* is still unpublished. All subsequent quotations are from the cited manuscript and page numbers follow the text parenthetically according to the original notation. George Scarborough, "The Lure," unpublished play, Shubert Archive, 1913.
25. "The general policy of the organized medical profession in the nineteenth century was to charge as much as the public would pay, and physicians actually banded together to crusade for less charity work." Burton J. Bledstein, *The Culture of Professionalism: The Middle Class and the Development of Higher Education in America* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1976), 108.
26. Ibid., 105–6.
27. Ibid., 92.
28. Joseph M. Gabriel, "Anesthetics and the Chemical Sublime," *Raritan* 30, no. 1 (2010): 73. For the germane concept of "spectatorial Sympathy" also see Karen Halttunen, "Humanitarianism and the Pornography of Pain in Anglo-American Culture," *The American Historical Review* 100, no. 2 (1995): 307.

29. See T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880–1920* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1983).
30. Citing an article in *The Archives of Internal Medicine*, the *Herald* (and later the *Journal of Zoophily*) reported that eyes of children at St. Vincent's home were infected with tuberculosis, causing severe pain and even permanent blindness for some of the children. See the website of the American Antivivisection Society, accessed July 15, 2011, http://www.aavs.org/site/pp.aspx?c=bkLTKfOSLhK6E&b=6452353&printmode=1.
31. In the long history of unauthorized medical experiments on human subjects in the United States, syphilis has of course a conspicuous record of such experimentations. One of the most recent and outrageous episodes is the infamous Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment, which was only terminated in 1972. For more information on the subject see James H. Jones, *Bad Blood: The Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment* (New York: The Free Press, 1993).
32. A. Toxen Worm, Shubert Press Department Note (New York, Shubert Archive, n.d. ca. 1917).
33. For this notion of science see Bledstein, *The Culture of Professionalism*, 90.
34. A. Toxen Worm, "The Transformation of Olive Wyndham," Shubert Press Department Note (New York, Shubert Archive, n.d. ca. 1917).
35. Ibid.
36. "The Knife Most Potent of Walter's Creation," *New York American*, April 13, 1917.
37. Martha H. Patterson, *Beyond the Gibson Girl: Reimagining the American New Woman, 1895–1915* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 3–4. In Alice Wellington Rollins's *Uncle Tom's Tenement* Cassie seems to employ the same tactic to damage the man who keeps her as a lover. Edith Wharton has masterfully captured this dynamic in the portrait of Undine Spragg in *The Custom of the Country*.
38. Gabriel, "Anesthetics," 76.
39. Ibid., 79.
40. According to Ilza Veith, Mitchell described Freud's writings as "filthy things" that should be consigned to the fire. Quoted in Ellen L. Bassuk,

"The Rest Cure: Repetition or Resolution of Victorian Women's Conflicts," in Susan Rubin Suleiman, ed., *The Female Body in Western Culture* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1985), 149.
41. Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper," in Paul Negri, ed., *"The Yellow Wallpaper" and Other Stories* (Mineola: Dover Publications, [1911] 1997).
42. Martha J. Cutter, "The Writer as Doctor: New Models of Medical Discourse in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's Later Fiction," *Literature and Medicine* 20, no. 2 (2001).
43. Ibid., 154.
44. "Mr. Walter writes of Mixed Horrors," *Chicago Evening Post*, March 1, 1917.
45. Douglas O. Linder, "Harry Thaw Trials," *UMKC School of Law: Famous Trials*, accessed November 8, 2013, http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/thaw/thawhome.html.
46. Even though the disease remains unnamed in the play, more than one reviewer expressed his suspicion that it might be syphilis. Cf. Percy Hammond, "*The Knife* by Eugene Walter at the Chicago," Unidentified clipping (New York, Shubert Archive, n.d. ca. 1917); and Hedwood Broun, "The Knife Proves to be a Thriller but an Unpleasant Play," *New York Tribune*, April 13, 1917.
47. Cf. "Use Stage as Pulpit to Preach Strong Medical Sermon," *New York Times*, April 6, 1913.
48. *The Crux* was published separately as a book in 1911 by the Charlton company. Dana Seitler, Introduction to *The Crux*, by Charlotte Perkins Gilman (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 3. It received very little critical attention until 2002 when, in the course of one year, two critical editions were published respectively by Duke University Press and University of Delaware Press. Hereafter, the quotes from the novel refer to the following edition: Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Crux* (Durham: Duke University Press, [1911] 2003). They will be parenthetically cited.
49. In the preface Gilman refers the reader to Morrow's *Social Diseases and Marriage* and to Lavinia Docks's *Hygiene and Morality*.
50. See Mary Roth Walsh, *"Doctors Wanted: No Women Need Apply": Sexual Barriers in the Medical Profession, 1835–1975* (New Haven and

London: Yale University Press, 1977), 186; Regina Markell Morantz-Sanchez, “The ‘Connecting Link’: The Case for the Woman Doctor in 19th-century America,” in Judith Walzer Leavitt and Ronald J. Numbers, eds., *Sickness and Health in America: Readings in the History of Medicine and Public Health* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1978); and Gloria Moldow, *Women Doctors in Gilded-Age Washington: Race, Gender and Professionalization* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987).

51. Both Brandt and Cutter mention the New York attorney William A. Purrington among the most ardent supporters of complete openness and direct intervention on the part of physicians in cases of possible contagion. Cutter, “The Writer as Doctor,” 164 and Brandt, *No Magic Bullet*, 18.

52. Social hygienists were in favor of the endorsement of “eugenic marriage laws” and wished that disclosing the details of one’s health before marriage would become a custom of the patients rather than a confidentiality-breaching duty of the doctors. Brandt, *No Magic Bullet*, 18.

53. Jennifer S. Tuttle, Introduction to *The Crux*, by Charlotte Perkins Gilman (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2002), 28–29.

54. Female doctors were often invoked, discussed, and critiqued in the form of literary characters to the point that the “lady doctor novel” instigated the fantasy of writers like Harriet Beecher Stowe (*My Wife and I*, 1871); Mark Twain (*The Gilded Age*, 1873); W. D. Howell (*Doctor Breen’s Practice*, 1881); Elizabeth Stuart Phelps (*Doctor Zay*, 1882) and Sarah Orne Jewett (*A Country Doctor*, 1884). Jennifer Tuttle provides a concise bibliography on the genre in her Introduction to *The Crux*. See Tuttle, Introduction to *The Crux*, 21, 62.

55. Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “The Vintage,” in Denise Knight, ed., *“The Yellow Wallpaper” and Selected Stories of Charlotte Perkins Gilman* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, [1916] 1994).

56. Priscilla Wald, *Contagious: Cultures, Carriers, and the Outbreak Narrative* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2008), 2.

57. “Use Stage as Pulpit to Preach Strong Medical Sermon,” *New York Times*, April 6, 1913.

58. All the quotes from the American version of the play *Damaged Goods* are taken from Eugène Brieux, *Damaged Goods*, trans. John Pollock (New York: Brentano's Books, 1912) as found in the website *Questia*, accessed May 16, 2011, www.questia.com/library/1824713/damaged-goods-the-great-play-les-avariaes-of-brieux. The page numbers will follow the text parenthetically. An interesting novelized version adapted by Upton Sinclair "with the approval of the author" was also published in 1931.
59. Cf. Eugène Brieux, *Les Avariés* (Paris: P. V. Stock & C., [1914]).
60. Scholars have emphasized that physicians had actually catalyzed prescriptive powers that previously resided with the church, and that, in a secular culture dominated by a scientific creed, much of the authority previously allotted to religious leaders had passed to the medical profession. Anna Garlin Spencer's addressing Dr. Morrow as "a prophet and a priest" is an explicit example of this tendency. Brandt, *No Magic Bullet*, 51.
61. Annette Kuhn reports that, during the late 1910s, propaganda films about venereal disease appeared on both sides of the Atlantic. *Damaged Goods* had an American version in 1915 and a British one released four years later. In 1937, another film loosely based on Brieux's play was directed by Phil Goldstone, for Grand National Pictures, but venereal disease was never mentioned. See Kuhn, *Cinema*, 49.
62. *Damaged Goods* would then be part of the phenomenon that Timothy Gilfoyle associates with the demise of commercial prostitution and that he calls a "resacralization of sexuality." Timothy J. Gilfoyle, *City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790–1920* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1992), 313.
63. Wald, *Contagious*, 4.
64. This definition of myth is drawn from Wald's elaboration of Bruce Lincoln's theoretical work. See ibid., 10 and Bruce Lincoln, *Discourse on the Construction of Society: Comparative Studies of Myth, Ritual and Classification* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).
65. According to Nancy Tomes the acceptance of the germ theory came at a time when Progressivism made the fear and elimination of dangerous bacteria part of American Political culture. See Nancy Tomes, *The Gospel of Germs: Men, Women, and the Microbe in American Life* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1998).

66. Tuttle, Introduction to *The Crux*, 27.
67. While the existence of "healthy carriers" is a medical discovery in the field of phorology dating back to 1907, the term "superspreader" is related to the hysteria of contagion and surfaced in journalistic accounts of the SARS epidemic of 2003. Wald, *Contagious*, 4–5.
68. Ibid., 38.
69. Ibid., 163–216.
70. Luker, "Sex, Social Hygiene, and the State," 602.
71. Johnson, *Sisters in Sin*, 181.
72. Brandt, *No Magic Bullet*, 57.
73. Nancy K. Bristow, *Making Men Moral: Social Engineering During the Great War* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1996), 6–7. Bristow's book on the CTCA provides an extensively researched account of the role of gender and social engineering in this particular period of Progressivism.
74. The Chamberlain-Kahn Act of July 1918 created a federal institutional structure for social hygiene also endowed with enforcement powers, thus granting the social hygiene movement the imprimatur of the federal government. Luker, "Sex, Social Hygiene, and the State," 617.
75. Brandt, *No Magic Bullet*, 66.
76. Brandt quotes the flyer distributed by the Western Social Hygiene Association eloquently entitled "Could the Kaiser Do Worse?" Ibid., 73.
77. Initially titled *Fit to Fight*, *Fit to Win*, the film was directed by Edward H. Griffith and seen by about 50,000 men. It showed the vicissitudes of five soldiers on the camp, and how they dealt with the temptation of vice and the occurrence of infection. Out of five, only two reach the front. Cf. *Fit to Win* (War Department Commission on Training Camp Activities et al., 1919). See Kuhn, *Cinema*, 150. Also see Eric Schaefer, "Of Hygiene and Hollywood: Origins of the Exploitation Film," *Velvet Light Trap*, no. 30 (1992): 34.
78. During the war the term took on a broader meaning and came to define any girl who would have intercourse with a soldier, with or without payment. Cf. Bristow, *Making Men Moral*.
79. *The End of the Road* (U.S. War Department et al., 1919). The film was directed by Edward H. Griffith. Kuhn, Bristow, and Brandt all discuss the film.

80. Brandt, *No Magic Bullet*, 85.
81. Maud Miner, for example, resigned from her position within the Section on Protective Work for Girls when she realized that the only group being protected was soldiers. Other suffragists and former purity actives like Edith Houghton Hooker and Dr. Katherine Bushnell voiced similar concerns. See Luker, "Sex, Social Hygiene, and the State," 621; and Bristow, *Making Men Moral*, 126–27.
82. Bristow quotes the Bulletin No. 20 from the Section of Protective Work for Girls of 29 April 1918. Bristow, *Making Men Moral*, 126.
83. For more exhaustive data on the public resources spent by President Wilson to create and maintain forty-three new detention homes to hold women charged under federal violations see Luker, "Sex, Social Hygiene, and the State," 622; and Bristow, *Making Men Moral*, 129–31.
84. Jacques Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy," in *Dissemination* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, [1972] 1981).
85. George Rosen, *A History of Public Health* (New York: MD Publ., 1958), 215.

Conclusion

> Progress, far from consisting in change, depends on retentiveness.
> —George Santayana, *The Life of Reason*, 1905–1906

In 1913, the *New York World* proclaimed the birth of the Flapper.[1] In the same year, the play *Damaged Goods* took America by storm. These two events marked the demise of the New Woman and the white slave, respectively. With the rise of the flapper in the late teens and twenties, the high-minded, socially engaged New Woman lost ground to more aesthetically inflected ideals of modern femininity. At the same time, the unexpected success of the anti-syphilis play signaled the dissipation of the rhetoric of white slavery in favor of social hygiene, a transition made complete by the changed circumstances after the American entry into World War I. At the end of the war, American society was profoundly transformed in many ways, including the demise of old-order gender relations. After the conflict, in fact, Progressives involved with the Commission on Training Camp Activities found themselves alienated from mainstream American culture, although the surveillance structure they had created to implement their social vision lived on in many ways.

Alongside changes in models of femininity, what Lois Banner has called "a general American fascination with young women" continued.[2] Young white women, Banner maintains, had been used as symbols of the American character since antebellum times and had in turn embodied the conflicts between purity and sensuality, between traditional society and the future, and between the beauty of a pastoral utopia and the ugliness of the industrial world. The national idealization of women began when the nation's founders valorized the concept of "Republican Motherhood," a radical shift from the Puritan belief that women were less virtuous than men. The nineteenth-century Cult of True Womanhood perfected this spiritualization of women and viewed them as representatives of morality. Still, Victorianism also secretly nourished the obverse tendency, namely a public fascination with female physicality grounded in the double standard. My investigation of

waywardness between the New Woman and the white slave has constituted an approach to the concept of femininity as it emerged from this split imaginary.

Already in Victorian America, the category of gender organized society in a way that allowed specific women's cultures to re-code apparently restrictive mandates. This was done through practices that complicated and defied the separate-sphere model prescribed by normative paradigms such as the Cult of True Womanhood. As the normalizing force of the Victorian model was undermined from within through the resignification of the purity imperative, the Progressive New Woman appeared on the social scene, bringing those political battles that the early maternalist movement had sought to master in the first half of the nineteenth century onto the public stage at the beginning of the twentieth century. As an important source of Progressive sensibility, social maternalism bequeathed a mixed and difficult inheritance to its New Women descendants. The latter continued the socializing mission of maternalism while incorporating new ideas about sexuality, evolution, and social critique. If the bottom line of the New Woman's identity was a repeal of domesticity in favor of a politicized awareness of and participation in the world, the intimate correlative of this attitude was the discovery of the sexual in sophisticated explorations of the libidinal dimension of women's lives.

Concurrently, with the decline of what Freud called "Civilized Morality," the ascent of alternative femininities presented by immigrant and working-class women was deeply troubling to the defenders of the old order, as well as to some representatives of the Progressive cohort. The massive entry of women into the labor force gave visibility to a generation of "rebel girls" who, by virtue of their independence as wage earners, their increasing political awareness, and their ability to navigate the urban maze as sexualized figures, were legitimate incarnations of Progressive New Womanhood. These new political subjects forcefully denounced the conjunction between industrialism and patriarchy in the largely female strikes of 1909–1910 that agitated the garment sector. Only a few years later, the final phase of the struggle for women's suffrage saw the National Woman's Party engaged in similarly blatant forms of militant activism that finally achieved the constitutional

amendment for the nearly century-old suffrage movement that decades of less disruptive political protest had failed to bring about. In spite of the ideological and class difference that separated most of the labor and suffrage movement's constituencies, the compelling waywardness exuded by both cohorts through their unabashed performances of dissent was countered with disproportionate reactions through forms of gendered punishment that, among other things, stigmatized the public woman as an immoral woman.

As the least socially acceptable among the New Women, working girls attracted the attentions of the reformers who longed for a moral regeneration of society. This reform-minded conservatism sought the return of independent ladies to secluded environments, which would make them less threatening to the patriarchal status quo. Thus, while the supposedly separate spheres shifted to a more osmotic—although still asymmetric—configuration, the recrudescence of the anti-prostitution crusade reinforced gender boundaries and rekindled the affective relation of the population to a state that should principally protect "the peace of the citizens" in a new androcentric form. The supposed need to protect the purity of women and pure Americanness from changing times translated into worries about the new flood of immigrants, the alienating presence of industrialism, and the hidden ghosts of city life. Considering the Progressives' preoccupation with prostitution from this point of view, I have postulated that the measures they took against white slavery can be understood as a backlash against a century of surreptitious openness of the female/private sphere toward society, labor, and politics. More precisely, I have traced how the transnational preoccupation with purity intersected with American fears about the status of women, immigrants, and the nation's newly acquired imperial subjects. This collision of anxieties took place against the backdrop of slavery, America's "original sin" against the racial Other, and began in pre-Progressive times. My analysis of Alice Wellington Rollins's *Uncle Tom's Tenement* has demonstrated how one of the first novels to consider the urban prostitute as a privileged object of knowledge in her own right[3] also initiated the process of the "alienation" of slavery as a modern myth, producing a semantic shift from black to white. Rollins

contributed to this transformation by transposing Stowe's abolitionist icons onto an Irish working-class tenement. Within this transposition, Rollins's analysis of the repercussions of capitalism for the city's poor also countered the nascent hermeneutics of sexual suspicion,[4] a common feature in slumming literature, which often reduced the tenement novel to a peephole into the titillating secrets of the city.

Importantly, Rollins drew together three historical subjects—black African slaves, European immigrants, and American-born women—which became central in the migration of the noun "slavery" from the realm of racialized chattel slavery to that of the classist exploitation of industrial labor, and eventually to the prostitution of the daughters of the nation. In Rollins's novel we have observed how the concept of slavery itself started to shift in meaning, losing the political connotation it had during the struggle for abolition, and acquiring an association with a struggle for self-mastery, from the enslavement of the Other as property to the enslavement of the self by vice.[5] However, old conceptions about slavery persisted, coexisting and coalescing with new ones in the literary depiction of the female characters who would populate the panorama of naturalism in the two decades to follow. Rollins's Eliza and Cassie, cognates of Crane's Maggie and Dreiser's Carrie, fashioned as they are on Stowe's mulattas, uncannily replicated a connection that in the mind of the middle-class reader conflated purity with whiteness and immorality with blackness.

Because the widespread yearning for the regeneration of public life coincided with the heyday of scientific racism throughout Progressivism, Progressive policies and projects of moral and social renewal that formed the foundation for American society in the twentieth century were inflected by racial and ethnic bias. This undercurrent significantly influenced the development of vice reform and even seeped into the writings of the most enlightened social-justice Progressives, those who, like Jane Addams, however unselfish their devotion to the commonweal may have been, nonetheless addressed public and private morality with an often narrow and race-inflected rhetoric. The polarized imaginary popularized by the quick spreading of white slavery tracts hinged on the character of the helpless white girl who, unaccustomed to the dangerous

temptations of city life, falls victim to ethnic vice syndicates. The Manichaeism of this melodramatic format, which was shared by the belligerent muckrakers, was effective in valorizing protection as the imperative that justified middle-class intervention to reform and control the varied urban crowd.

Undoubtedly, by supporting the anti-prostitution campaign, female reformers "took the male rescue fantasy and recast it as a mother-daughter emancipation drama."[6] On the other hand, working girls, envisioned as disorderly adolescents, and African Americans, envisioned as incapable of governing their newly obtained freedom, were equally relegated to the contingent of the helpless in need of institutional protection. In short, emancipation inevitably combined with limitation to the extent that protection entailed control. The dialectic between liberation and limitation defined important conflicts over generational authority, the category of adolescents and their need for tutelage, and the institutional incursion into areas that had previously been beyond public scrutiny. This latter intrusion was advocated by many private groups who agitated for a substantial rationalization and sanitization of society. Such encroachment took the form of public-private partnerships —which began with the Preventive Societies of the late nineteenth century and continued with the Committees of Notables of the early twentieth century—and produced long-term consequences for the realization of individual freedoms in America. The legal vicissitudes surrounding white slavery reflected this regulatory impulse in combination with a growing sentiment of racial suspicion, which ushered Jim Crow back into the egalitarian environment of integrated northern cities such as New York.

My readings of the *Belle Moore* case and the Mann Act have shown how these tensions coalesced into legal acts of ostracization that renewed the exclusion of African American citizens from the polity, while desperately keeping alive an idea of female American purity that had long been defunct. Incidentally, but symbolically, the Mann Act was passed the year after the first mass production of the Model T launched the dream of independent mobility for the masses. In this context, Walter Benn Michaels has suggested that the white slavery craze could

represent the “gendered expression of nostalgia for slavery that had dominated the Southern plantation writings of the 1880s.”[7] But rather than in nostalgic terms, I would regard the connection between sexism and racism that informed white slavery as based on common economic, social, and psychological forces that underpinned the oppression of both women and non-whites. In the light of Paula Giddings’s observation that “the greatest gains made by women have come in the wake of strident Black demands for their [Blacks’] rights,”[8] the institutional responses to the white slavery scare present a setback for women and African Americans alike. In the same way, the genesis of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the history of black America, and the regulation of female sexuality were linked together in the Progressive Era in a relationship that defined “a government that has been at odds, more often than not . . . with its own professed values.”[9] Yet this contradiction also voiced the impatience of a large number of private citizens who longed for participation in that government, at a historical moment when the traditional party loyalty of the nineteenth century was being challenged by extra-party pressure groups of all sorts.[10]

While in the “theater of justice” the law became “the ultimate realm of individual conflict and social solution,”[11] the theaters themselves cast the public debate on white slavery and social reform in ways that often confirmed but also significantly challenged traditional assumptions concerning the relation between women and the theater. The trailblazing Broadway playwright Rachel Crothers invested the theme of white slavery with the task of expressing the multiple voices of the female condition under Progressivism and how they conflicted, rather than harmonized, around the critique of the double standard of conduct that still regulated the middle class in the early 1910s. While Crother’s feminist sensitivity allowed her to spotlight the wayward female as the dignified catalyst of such tensions, another playwright who developed the theme, Eugene Walter, interestingly hinted at the hidden complexities of the significance of white slavery for upper-class genteel women in the framework of the ongoing medicalization of moral reform.

Like the other strands of reform that animated and divided Progressive America, the agitation that brought together gender politics and vice legislation produced fundamental changes to American society that altered both governmental institutions and the relationship of the citizens to their government. The Progressive construction of race, gender, ethnicity, and class sometimes bound reformers to their own inconsistencies, but it also expressed the conflicting ideological positions held by a broad range of Americans.[12] The rhetoric of Progressivism interpellated citizens by infusing affect into a political language that straddled the scientific and the sentimental. As Laurent Berlant has put it, "the displacement of politics to the realm of feeling . . . shows the obstacles to social change that emerge when politics become privatized."[13] These obstacles were placed in the paths of women.

Casting American girls as potential white slaves—that is, as volitionless victims easily snatched from the urban tenements and thus also from the polity—reinstated Victorian ideals of purity while reinstituting the male savior, whose exclusive heroic role the vast reformative enterprises launched by women had begun to threaten. Furthermore, this resignification prepared ideological measures of containment that were to thwart women as political actors, regardless of whether they were enfranchised or not. The ensuing legislation, which redefined the civil identity of the full-fledged American citizen, facilitated the installment of a certain "moral imagination" in the mechanisms of the state.

The increasing federal influence on everyday American life, starting with pure food and continuing with pure women, prompted the entrenchment of a conspiratorial mentality that continued in the hands of the CTCA with the establishment of numerous detainment houses for women. This conspiratorial thinking emblematically erupted with the Prohibition Amendment of 1919 and with the Red Scare hysteria of 1919 to 1921. Nonetheless, the same regulative impulse also prepared the field for the sweeping state measures that succored Americans after the Great Depression. In this respect, women's lobbying served as a crucial bridge to the social welfare reforms of the 1930s introduced by President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal.[14]

Nobel Prize Laureate and *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman addressed the conflicts raised by Barack Obama's welfare turn by pointing out that the "great divide" in American politics is less about pragmatic issues than about differences in the two "moral imaginations" underpinning the public debate.[15] Krugman's distinction is articulated in terms of divergent beliefs about what constitutes social justice. The birth of these two imaginations can be traced back to the Progressive Era, a fact that explains why "when historians fight about Progressivism . . . they are also struggling over the basic meanings of American democracy."[16] Although social justice Progressives "never successfully convinced Americans that social responsibility has to come before individual needs in order to create a good democratic society,"[17] they endowed the political sphere with more than the one side of the welfare debate. They also commenced the conflict, still raging today, between the need for a protective state to curb powerful private interests and the fears, frustrations, and risks inextricably coupled with what political theorist Melissa Orlie calls "the inevitability and necessities of governance."[18] Among these inevitable necessities, the problems of protection and control, which accompany every wielding of governmental power over individuals or a group of citizens, tower in all their ambiguity.

Because in the Progressive Era the dominant arrangement between the sexes signified by the metaphor of the "separate spheres" began to falter, the period can also be imagined as the time in which traditionally male and female moral imaginations started to mesh. For example, the crusading mothers of the commonweal had found it productive, in the nineteenth century, to herald the superiority of unified female "feelings" to storm the world of civic engagement. With the dawn of the Progressive Era, male reformers attempted to regain lost terrain as they too wielded sentimentalism as a communicative weapon. If in the new century some reformers like Jane Addams firmly believed in a gendered approach to democracy, though one in which women were considered superior in certain capacities, many other women lived by an ethos inspired by traditionally male anti-nurturing attitudes, and by the demands of a rationalized, professionalized society.

The gender divide between the public and private spheres, extended by the rhetoric of white slavery, was countered, in practice, by a divide between two emerging moralities—the one looking empathically at the Other, and the other wanting to hold the Other disproportionately accountable for a whole range of personal and collective responsibilities. The nascent dichotomy between these two moral imaginations subsumed and virtually superseded the gender divide. This turn did not entail a collapse of patriarchy, nor did it entail a rapid surge of women to political office; it rather translated into a panorama of female political allegiances, divided along lines of affiliation that overrode female solidarity and women's unity on the political stage, which the final push for suffrage had forcefully and momentarily realized. The aftermath of the suffrage struggle showed, to the contrary, how plural and segmented womanhood actually was. The dialectic between New Women and white slaves in the 1910s, and the significatory arsenal that the two figures deployed, foregrounded the fragmentation of the female world that began in the 1920s, and that continued to inhabit the history of feminism like a haunted legacy. In a similar way, the lessons of Progressivism have been both reclaimed and rejected by representatives at the core of the national democratic drama, but the era's unrivaled richness in its experimentation with democratic forms remains a lasting inspiration for any citizen eager to pursue new approaches to civic life in the home, in the workplace, and in the community.

NOTES

1. Lois W. Banner, *American Beauty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 166.
2. Ibid., 167.
3. Jann Matlock, *Scenes of Seduction: Prostitution, Hysteria, and Reading Difference in Nineteenth Century France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 4.
4. Scott Herring, *Queering the Underworld: Literature and the Undoing of Lesbian and Gay History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 10.

5. T. J. Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877–1920* (New York: Harper Collins, 2009), 9.
6. Susan Faludi, "American Electra: Feminism's Ritual Matricide," *Harper's Magazine* 321, no. 1925 (2010): 36.
7. Walter Benn Michaels, "The Contracted Heart," *New Literary History* 21, no. 3 (1990): 511–12.
8. Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America.* (New York: Bantam Books, 1984), 6.
9. Kenneth O'Reilly, *Racial Matters: The FBI's Secret Files on Black America (1960–1972)* (New York: MacMillan, 1989), 8.
10. Daniel T. Rodgers, "In Search of Progressivism," *Reviews in American History* 10, no. 4 (1982): 115–16. For a study of New York as example of this transition see Richard L. McCormick, *From Realignment to Reform: Political Change in New York State* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981).
11. Peter Schneck, "The Reflection of Race and Law in African American Literature," *American Studies Journal*, no. 51 (2008), accessed December 10, 2011, www.asjournal.org/archive/51/108.html.
12. Maureen A. Flanagan, *America Reformed: Progressives and Progressivism, 1890s–1920s* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), vi–vii.
13. Lauren Berlant, *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), xii.
14. Lynn Dumenil, "The New Woman and the Politics of the 1920s," *OAH Magazine of History*, no. July (2007): 26.
15. Paul Krugman, "A Tale of Two Moralities," *The New York Times*, January 13, 2011.
16. Robert D. Johnston, "Re-Democratizing the Progressive Era: The Politics of Progressive Era Historiography," *Journal of the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era* 1, no. 1 (2002): 68.
17. Flanagan, *America Reformed*, 284–85.
18. Melissa A. Orlie, *Living Ethically, Acting Politically* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997), 1.

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About the Author

Barbara Antoniazzi is a postdoctoral fellow in American Studies at the Free University Berlin. Her current research interests include American cultural studies and literature, performance studies, feminism, and the culture of neoliberalism.